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**University of Alberta**

Politics and Personality: Characterization in Xenophon's *Hellenica*

by

Ronald James Kroeker



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in  
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

in

Classical Literature

Department of History and Classics

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 2002





## **University of Alberta**

### **Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research**

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Politics and Personality: Characterization in Xenophon's Hellenica* submitted by Ronald James Kroeker in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classical Literature.



## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation of the way Xenophon portrays individuals in his historical work, the *Hellenica*. Confusion in this area has often prevailed among scholars through lack of a proper appreciation of the complexity of Xenophon's literary art in his portrayal of Greek leaders. Particularly important is his use of contrasts and comparisons between different characters to emphasize the nature of one or both of the individuals involved. Perhaps even more important for understanding Xenophon's characterizations is to appreciate his overall purpose in the *Hellenica*, which is to explore the question of why the Greeks of his time were not able to come to a stable political order in spite of having many outstanding leaders. In his characterizations Xenophon typically shows first the military, moral and/or political strengths of a major leader, and the political potentialities that those strengths represent, before subtly indicating the leader's weaknesses and shortcomings. In the end the individual comes to a bad end, often quite ironically, bringing harm to the political stability and strength of his state and to the political stability of Greece as a whole. Though the *Hellenica* is in many ways much more like Thucydides than Herodotus, Xenophon does seem to reflect the same basic orientation as the latter with respect to the rise and fall of great men. Toward the end of the *Hellenica* the divine, rather than the human, element becomes much more prominent as the cause of failure. This trend reaches its climax in the campaigns of Epaminondas, who, in spite of flawless foresight, intelligence and energy, is not able to





gain hegemony for the Thebans and, as a result, a settled political order to Greece, for thus the gods have ordained.





## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I could not have done it without friends and family. Thanks to Larry, who was a real catalyst at the beginning, though I fear he would rather I had studied a saint, like Matthew or Luke, than Xenophon. I owe an unpayable debt of love to all my friends at Sherwood Park Community Church, for they have been a matrix of grace in so many ways. Finally I want to thank my children, Stephen, Alison and Andrew, who have been an unfailing source of joy, and my wife Helen, whose unstinting love and encouragement has been my pillar and foundation. *Gratias Deo super inenarrabili dono eius.*



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Xenophon as a Writer**

The evaluation of Xenophon as a writer has varied considerably in the years since he wrote. In ancient times he was highly regarded as both a philosopher and a historian. Dionysius of Halicarnassus placed Xenophon among those writers most fitting to imitate, and praised him for his pleasant style, his choice of fine and impressive historical themes and his literary arrangements.<sup>1</sup> Arrian used him as the model for his own historical, philosophical and technical works.<sup>2</sup> Lucian considered him an even-handed, fair-minded historian.<sup>3</sup> Diogenes Laertius classified him, along with Plato and Antisthenes, as one of the three great Socratics.<sup>4</sup> Eunapius extolled him for adorning philosophy in both word and deed.<sup>5</sup> Xenophon continued to enjoy a high reputation with the revival of Greek learning in the Renaissance.<sup>6</sup> Machiavelli, for

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<sup>1</sup>Dion. Hal., *Comp.* 10; *Pomp.* 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup>See Phillip Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 1-5.

<sup>3</sup>Lucian, *Hist. conscr.*, 39.

<sup>4</sup>Diog. Laert., 2.47.

<sup>5</sup>Eunap., VS 1.1.

<sup>6</sup>See especially J. K. Anderson, *Xenophon* (New York: Scribner's, 1972), 1-8.



example, cited Xenophon's works more frequently than any other author save Livy.<sup>7</sup> In the last two centuries, however, Xenophon's reputation has declined. Modern dissatisfaction with him began with the critique of the *Hellenica* by B. G. Niebuhr published in 1827,<sup>8</sup> and disparagement of his historical writings has continued to the present. A recent book on the ideology of the classical Greek historians dubs Xenophon a "shallow, moralistic prattler."<sup>9</sup> Modern opinion has been sharply negative toward him as a philosopher as well.<sup>10</sup> Typical is the opinion of F. H. Sandbach, who, while admitting that Xenophon was "an enlightened and well-intentioned exponent of current ideas," disparages him as "a

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<sup>7</sup>Leo Strauss, "Niccolo Machiavelli," in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Michael Cropsey, 3d ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 316.

<sup>8</sup>B. G. Niebuhr, "Über Xenophons *Hellenika*," *Rh. Mus.* 1 (1827): 194-8; reprinted as "Über Xenophons *Hellenika*. (1826). Mit Einer Nachschrift (1828)," in *Kleine Historische und Philologische Schriften von B. G. Niebuhr* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1969), 464-82. See Christopher Tuplin, *The Failings of Empire: A Reading of Xenophon Hellenica* 2.3.11-7.5.27, *Hermes Einzelschriften*, vol. 76 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), 12-3. Anderson, *Xenophon*, 7 highlights the significance of T. B. Macaulay's scathing criticism of Xenophon in the *Edinburgh Review* of May, 1828. See also Frances Skoczylas Pownall, "Shifting Viewpoints in Xenophon's *Hellenica*: The Arginusae Episode," *Athenaeum* 88 (2000): 499-513, especially 499.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Hunt, *Slaves, Warfare, and Ideology in the Greek Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 145.

<sup>10</sup>See Vivienne Gray, *The Framing of Socrates: The Literary Interpretation of Xenophon's Memorabilia*, *Hermes Einzelschriften*, vol. 79 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 1-4, for a summary of recent scholarly opinion of Xenophon as an interpreter of Socrates, especially in the *Memorabilia*.



superficial thinker, whose criticisms did not cut deep.”<sup>11</sup>

Modern evaluation of Xenophon, however, has not been unrelentingly negative. Classicists who have taken a literary approach to Xenophon have been much more positive than those who have primarily mined his works for historical facts and philosophical doctrines. W. P. Henry was a pioneer in this regard.<sup>12</sup> He called into serious question the generally accepted conclusions of Xenophontic scholarship (particularly with respect to the *Hellenica*) which were almost entirely based on the questionable assumption that Xenophon was a sincere but simple-minded writer, whose methods and opinions were entirely transparent. He called for a re-evaluation of Xenophon’s historical writings, particularly the *Hellenica*, which he considered not nearly so straightforward as was generally assumed.<sup>13</sup> Ten years later, W. E. Higgins also called for a new look at Xenophon.<sup>14</sup> He saw Xenophon as a highly ironic writer who was keenly aware of the discrepancy between

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<sup>11</sup>F. H. Sandbach, “Plato and the Socratic Work of Xenophon,” in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, ed. P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 480.

<sup>12</sup>W. P. Henry, *Greek Historical Writing: A Historiographical Essay Based on Xenophon’s Hellenica* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967).

<sup>13</sup>See especially *ibid.*, 191-210.

<sup>14</sup>W. E. Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian: The Problem of the Individual and the Society of the Polis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).





appearance and reality.<sup>15</sup> More recent monographs by Vivienne Gray (writing on the *Hellenica* and the *Memorabilia*),<sup>16</sup> Christopher Tuplin (treating *Hell.* 2.3.11-7.5.27)<sup>17</sup> and John Dillery (dealing mainly with the *Hellenica* and the *Anabasis*),<sup>18</sup> approaching Xenophon with a careful examination of his work on its own terms, have added much to the understanding of this writer and his ideas.

Some who have approached Xenophon with an interest in his political perspective have also been positive toward him. Leo Strauss considered Xenophon's writings to be essential for understanding the political realities and the political analyses of the twentieth century. In his commentary on Xenophon's *Hiero* (1948), he wrote, "It is precisely when trying to bring to light the deepest roots of modern political thought that one will find it to be very useful, not to say indispensable, to devote some attention to the *Hiero*."<sup>19</sup> Strauss also wrote thorough

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<sup>15</sup>See especially *ibid.*, xi-xv, 1-20.

<sup>16</sup>Vivienne Gray, *The Character of Xenophon's Hellenica* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) and *The Framing of Socrates*.

<sup>17</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*.

<sup>18</sup>John Dillery, *Xenophon and the History of His Times* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>19</sup>Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael Roth, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 24.



interpretations of the *Oeconomicus* and the *Memorabilia*,<sup>20</sup> approaching Xenophon as a subtle, ironic author who must be interpreted carefully with meticulous attention to detail.<sup>21</sup> More recently Gerald Proietti has written a monograph on Xenophon's understanding of Spartan polity and politics based on the *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* and Lysander's role in the *Hellenica*.<sup>22</sup> He undertook this study in the belief that Xenophon makes a significant contribution to the contemporary quest for a stable political order.<sup>23</sup> Proietti's study also makes a careful perusal of the text of Xenophon with a constant awareness of the subtleties and ironies found there.<sup>24</sup> Two other studies which express admiration for Xenophon's political thinking are worth noting. Winston Weathers suggested that Xenophon's concern for the ideal man rather than the ideal state provides a flexibility and depth to Xenophon's ideas

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<sup>20</sup>Xenophon's *Socratic Discourse: An Interpretation of the Oeconomicus* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1970) and *Xenophon's Socrates* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972). See also Strauss' analysis of the *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum*, "The Spirit of Sparta or the Taste of Xenophon," *Social Research* 6 (1939): 502-36.

<sup>21</sup>See especially, *On Tyranny*, 26-7.

<sup>22</sup>Gerald Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta: An Introduction* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987).

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>24</sup>See also Christopher Bruell, "Xenophon," in *History of Political Philosophy*, 90-117. Bruell's approach too is characterized by a very close literary examination of Xenophon's works.



which are lacking in Plato and later political writers.<sup>25</sup> Neal Wood argued that Xenophon's political theory was superior to that of Plato and Aristotle, because he understood, as they did not, that the art of war is fundamentally creative, not acquisitive, and that there is a real practical connection between war on the one hand and politics and economics on the other.<sup>26</sup>

The distribution of positive and negative opinions about Xenophon as an author may well be instructive concerning the nature of Xenophon's writings. Historians want him to provide full and scrupulously accurate historical details; philosophers look to him for profound metaphysical speculations. But Xenophon's main strengths lie elsewhere. Literary scholars have valued Xenophon for good reason: he is a subtle author whose literary art exhibits skill and originality. He worked in a number of different genres: encomium (*Agesilaus*), dialogue (*Memorabilia*, *Oeconomicus*, *Hiero*), history (*Anabasis*, *Hellenica*), historical fiction (*Cyropaedia*), technical treatise (*Cynegeticus*, *De equitandi ratione*). His writings often display irony and humour: the wise man Simonides speaks for the happiness of the tyrant while Hiero himself argues for his cursedness (*Hiero*); the good man can be at the same time serious and humorous (*Mem.* 1.3.8, 4.1.1; *Symp.* 1.1); Socrates is much richer than the wealthy, aristocratic Critobulus (*Oec.* 2.1-9). He displays a keen

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<sup>25</sup>Winston Weathers, "Xenophon's Political Idealism," *CJ* 49 (1954): 317-21, 330.

<sup>26</sup>Neal Wood, "Xenophon's Theory of Leadership," *C&M* 25 (1964): 33-66.





interest in the portrayal of personality, most obviously in the *Symposium*, where the diverse characters at Callias' party are wittily and skilfully drawn such that each serves as a foil to Socrates, the hero and focus of the work. The *Hellenica*, in turn, shows many of the literary characteristics of these other writings of Xenophon. Xenophontic irony appears in the *Hellenica*, for example, in the sudden end of certain prominent leaders whose deaths come with a strange twist or reversal (Callicratidas, Theramenes, Lysander, Thrasybulus, Anaxibius, Jason, Epaminondas).<sup>27</sup> Also, Xenophon fills the *Hellenica* with carefully drawn characters whose traits stand out through the juxtaposition of contrasting, and sometimes analogous, characters (Callicratidas and Lysander, Critias and Theramenes; Mnasippus and Iphicrates, Jason and Polydamas).<sup>28</sup> That Xenophon employs quite complex juxtapositions of individuals whose roles are to be understood in the light of one another is shown by Dillery, who convincingly argues that the triad of Athenian ambassadors Callias, Autocles and Callistratus (6.4.4-17) each play off one another in a way strikingly similar to the triad of Spartan and allied ambassadors at 6.5.33-48; that is, within both triads the nature of each character is revealed by the contrast with his fellow ambassadors and by the parallel each forms with his corresponding ambassador in the other

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<sup>27</sup>*Hell.* 1.6.3; 2.3.56; 3.5.18-19; 4.8.30; 4.8.38-39; 6.4.31; 7.5.25.

<sup>28</sup>*Hell.* 1.6.1-33; 2.3.11-56; 6.2.5-32; 6.1.2-19.



triad.<sup>29</sup> We should, therefore, be vigilant of other literary devices as well, for in view of the compositional versatility observed in Xenophon's other works, it would be foolish to prejudge the *Hellenica* as a simple, unadorned chronicle of Greek affairs.

Certain political scientists have rightfully appreciated Xenophon's great concern for, and serious thinking about, the political problems of his day. Many of his works display this concern: the *Hiero* deals with the nature of tyranny; the *Cyropaedia* with the fundamental political problem of ruling men; the *Oeconomicus*, though ostensibly concerned with how to run a household well and profitably, turns out to be about the royal art of ruling (see 21.1-12); the *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* treats the Lycurgan political institutions of Sparta as the reason for the greatness of that state. Most significantly for our purposes, the *Hellenica* reflects this fundamental Xenophontic interest in politics, for, as I will show, it is an exploration of the realities which prevented Greece from developing stable political settlement.

### **The Nature of Xenophon's *Hellenica***

In addressing the ongoing controversy about the essential character and purpose of the *Hellenica*, we cannot avoid the question of composition. It is widely held that the *Hellenica* is made up of two (or more) distinct sections written at different times. The break is generally

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<sup>29</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 243-9.



made at 2.3.10. Advocates of this view point to such things as differences in particle usage, in approach to chronology and in attitude to religion to support their case.<sup>30</sup> In spite of a number of studies arguing for the unity of the *Hellenica*,<sup>31</sup> the bipartite assumption still prevails.<sup>32</sup> In my opinion, the arguments in favour of a strict division are not very compelling. Xenophon may indeed have written portions of the *Hellenica* at different times, but this by no means forces us to conclude, as most do,<sup>33</sup> that each section is distinct in character and purpose. Xenophon may have written the history of his times up to the fall of Athens, left it, and then returned many years later to explore the

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<sup>30</sup>See W. Dittenberger, "Sprachliche Kriterien für die Chronologie der platonischen Dialoge," *Hermes* 16 (1881): 321-45, who supports a tripartite composition based on particle usage, J. Hatzfeld, "Notes sur la composition des Hellénique," *Rev. Phil.* 4 (1930): 113-7, 209-26, Malcolm MacLaren, "On the Composition of Xenophon's *Hellenica*," *AJP* 55 (1934): 121-39, 249-62 and John Dillery, "Xenophon's Historical Perspectives" (Ph. D. diss., University of Michigan, 1989), Appendix 1.

<sup>31</sup>Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, especially 133-188, provides a detailed critique of the analytic views which divide the *Hellenica* into two (and sometimes more) sections; Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 99-101, and Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, throughout. Vivienne Gray, "Continuous History and Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1-2.3.10," *AJP* 112 (1991): 201-228, especially 211-228 refutes the stylistic arguments for division in considerable detail. See also the important discussion by Kenneth Dover in *HCT* 5.437-44, who cautions against exaggerating the differences between the two sections of the *Hellenica*.

<sup>32</sup>Simon Hornblower, "The Sources and Their Use," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. D. M. Lewis, et. al., 2d. ed., vol. 6, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1, says that "internal evidence shows a clear break in composition at II.3.10" and that this conclusion "carries such overwhelming conviction that it is not likely to be overthrown."

<sup>33</sup>C. H. Grayson, "Did Xenophon Intend to Write History?" in *The Ancient Historian and His Materials, Essays in honour of C. E. Stevens on his seventieth birthday*, ed. Barbara Levick (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants, England: Gregg International, 1975), 31-43, writes, "Once the major break at 2.3.9 is recognised, then it ceases to be possible to regard the *Hellenica* as a work conceived as a (historical) unity" (p. 33). Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 1-2, argues strongly for a methodology which treats the two parts of the *Hellenica* as distinct in nature and purpose.





same basic theme as it applied to the rise and fall of Sparta. It is possible too that he undertook his later writing with a somewhat different purpose and perspective which he then revised back into the first part. "Xenophon is careful not to mix different themes in a literary genre,"<sup>34</sup> and it is hard to understand why he would join two works with significantly different natures into a literary unit, without reworking one or both to make them conform to a single purpose.

A look at the text of the *Hellenica* itself indicates that the two sections should not be treated as distinct in purpose and character. Xenophon gives little indication in the text that he is making a new departure at 2.3.10. If we take the chronological summary at 2.3.9-10 as original,<sup>35</sup> then we have little reason to deny originality to the similar summaries at 1.2.19-3.1, 1.5.21-6.1, 2.1.7-10 and 2.2.24-3.2. On this premise therefore the summary at 2.3.9-10 is quite unremarkable. If, on the other hand, we posit that 2.9.10-11 is not original,<sup>36</sup> then there is little or nothing in the text to suggest a new departure here: Xenophon

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<sup>34</sup>W. R. Connor, "Historiography: Historical Writing in the Fourth Century and in the Hellenistic Period," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, ed. P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 460. See also Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 101, who writes, "Xenophon was always aware of the requirements of the form in which he wrote."

<sup>35</sup>A. E. Raubitschek, "Die sogenannten Interpolationen in den ersten beiden Büchern von Xenophons, 'Griechischer Geschichte'." Akten des VI. Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik, München, 1972. *Vestigia* 17 (1973): 315-25.

<sup>36</sup>See the two articles by Detlef Lotze, "Die Chronologischen Interpolationem in Xenophons *Hellenika*," *Philologus* 106 (1962): 1-13 and "War Xenophon selbst der Interpolator seiner *Hellenika* I-II?" *Philologus* 118 (1974): 215-17.



records the return of Lysander to Sparta (2.3.8-9) and then immediately begins his account of what happened in Athens after the end of the war. The summary at 5.1.35 is particularly significant since it explicitly refers to the destruction of the walls at Athens in such a way as to suggest that the King's Peace of 386 was comparable as an historical milestone to that earlier event: "Thus came about this first peace after the war which followed the destruction of the walls of Athens."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, certain links between the two sections of the *Hellenica* indicate that it should be viewed as a unity.<sup>38</sup> It has been observed that the descriptions of Teleutias (5.1.13-18) and Hermocrates (1.1.27-30) are strikingly similar in nature and purpose.<sup>39</sup> Also, Pharnabazus, in his speech to Agesilaus (5.1.32), makes a specific, detailed reference to his own activity which Xenophon records in 1.1.6. Now it might be argued that this is an insignificant connection between the two sections which involves only superficial details, but it does show that when Xenophon was writing the latter part of the *Hellenica* he had the earlier part vividly in mind, which strongly implies a unity of perspective for the whole. The unity of the *Hellenica* is also observed in the consistent treatment of the characters of

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<sup>37</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 206, believes that by this statement Xenophon is "coordinating the end of the Corinthian War with the end of the Peloponnesian War."

<sup>38</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, ix, believes that she demonstrates that "Xenophon wrote the work in the one consistent historiographical frame of mind from start to finish." Though my own view of Xenophon's historiographical frame of mind is quite different from Gray's, I agree with her general thesis in this regard.

<sup>39</sup>Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, 27-28.



Theramenes and Lysander, whose accounts span the two sections. Xenophon indicates, I believe, that the apparently wise and noble sentiments expressed by Theramenes in the rule of the Thirty are nothing more than specious posturings and do not indicate a change in characterization, since he continues to be the same clever, self-serving, manipulator that he was at the trial of the Arginusae generals and in the arrangement of the peace with Sparta after Aegospotami.<sup>40</sup> Lysander also retains the same cleverness and ambition after 2.3.10 that he displays before, and continues to experience the same sort of conflicts with other influential Spartans (Callicratidas and Agis before 2.3.10 and Pausanias and Agesilaus after).<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, much of the evidence cited to support the conclusion that the two sections differ in perspective is questionable. Some scholars, for example, contend that a growing pessimism (and a lessening influence of Thucydides) characterizes the *Hellenica* after 2.3.10. This pessimism, they believe, is indication of a later date for the second section of the *Hellenica* since it arises from Xenophon's disillusionment at the successive failures of Athens and Sparta as imperial powers and is similar to the pessimism of his other later

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<sup>40</sup>See below, pp. 64-116.

<sup>41</sup>See below, pp. 158-215.





works.<sup>42</sup> But this approach fails on two counts. First, pessimism is found not just in Xenophon's later works but also in his earlier, such as the *Anabasis*.<sup>43</sup> Second, though I acknowledge a pervasive pessimism in the *Hellenica*, I do not believe it is limited to the latter section, for one would be hard-pressed indeed to defend the optimism of Xenophon's account of the fall of Alcibiades (1.4.11-5.17), the trial of the Arginusae generals (1.7.1-35) or the battle of Aegospotami (2.1.20-32). To sum up, the differences between *Hell.* 1.1.1-2.3.9 and 2.3.10-7.4.27 are relatively insignificant and in no way prevent us from treating the work as a unity.

The main point of contention among scholars with respect to the essential nature of the *Hellenica* has been in what sense this work can be classified as history. For many years, beginning with Niebuhr in 1827, it was generally assumed that since Xenophon was a continuator of Thucydides, he was attempting to write history in the Thucydidean mould. That he did not reach the level of Thucydides' thoroughness of detail and depth of analysis was attributed to dishonesty and bias or to intellectual mediocrity or incapacity.<sup>44</sup> More recently a number of

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<sup>42</sup>Peter J. Rahn, "Xenophon's Developing Historiography," *TAPA* 102 (1971): 497-508; Dillery, *History of His Times*, 14-16.

<sup>43</sup>See Grayson, "Did Xenophon Intend to Write History?" 34.

<sup>44</sup>See G. E. Underhill, *A Commentary with Introduction and Appendix on the Hellenica of Xenophon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), x-xii, for a concise survey of nineteenth century opinion on the topic. George Cawkwell, *A History of My Times (Hellenica)*, trans. Rex Warner, with an introduction and notes by George Cawkwell (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 22-28, is typical of later opinion. To Cawkwell, Xenophon's approach to history was marred by a casual and personal approach to historical facts such that the *Hellenica* is best characterized as



scholars have sought to deal with the historical deficiencies of Xenophon in an entirely different way, by positing that Xenophon was not writing history at all when he wrote the *Hellenica*. These scholars hold that the *Hellenica* is a sort of philosophical tractate with a strong moralizing tendency and as such should not be classified as history at all, since history concerns itself mainly with political and military affairs of states.<sup>45</sup> The two most recent major monographs on the *Hellenica*, however, do not follow this trend: Tuplin makes a strong case for the *Hellenica* as a work of true history, if somewhat quirky,<sup>46</sup> and Dillery simply assumes that it is to be analyzed as an historical writing.<sup>47</sup> These two scholars, though, like the tractate advocates, attempt to analyze and appreciate the *Hellenica* on its own terms rather than in terms of how it measures up to Thucydides.

I believe that the basic approach of Tuplin and Dillery is the best way to solve the question of the nature and purpose of the *Hellenica*.

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“memoirs”.

<sup>45</sup>Grayson, “Did Xenophon Intend to Write History?” argues that Xenophon had no intention of writing history; the outwardly historical form of the work, he states, “is *purely* formal” (p. 33). Rainier Nickel, *Xenophon*, Erträge der Forschung, bd. 111 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 52, speaks of “die pädagogisch-philosophische Tendenz der *Hellenika*” which, according to him clearly excludes it from the genre of history. Gray, *Character of Xenophon’s Hellenica*, 7-10, concludes that Xenophon is a philosopher and not a historian, and that real interest is in morality and philosophy rather than in political and military affairs.

<sup>46</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 15-18.

<sup>47</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, especially, 3-7.



This work is clearly written as history, for it is in the main a record of the major political and military events that occurred in Greece between the years 411 and 362 B.C. That it has a pervasive moral concern is only a problem to the modern view of history, not the ancient. Xenophon's main concern in the *Hellenica* is in fact a political one, to explore why the Greeks were not able to establish a settled political order in his times. Moral and philosophical issues are important to the work, but mainly as they effect this overriding political concern.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, it is very difficult to believe that Xenophon did not view his *Hellenica* as in the same tradition as Thucydides (and Herodotus as well): he began the work roughly where Thucydides left off, with no formal preface but with the resumptive expression, "And after these things."<sup>49</sup> Though Henry notes a number of infelicities in the connection between the end of Thucydides and the beginning of the *Hellenica*,<sup>50</sup> there really is no good alternative to the conclusion that Xenophon is consciously picking up where his predecessor left off, and sees himself as a continuator of

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<sup>48</sup>Clifford Hindley, "Eros and Military Command in Xenophon," *CQ*, n.s., 44 (1994), 347, writes "[Xenophon] is one for whom the determinants of history are (under the gods) the personalities and actions of great (and not so great) men, and it is natural for him to observe the interaction between personal morality and political and military actions."

<sup>49</sup>Note too that after Xenophon's opening statement, he says that Thymochares came from Athens with a few ships, "and immediately the Lacedaemonian and Athenians again (αὖθις) fought a naval battle." The αὖθις also shows that Xenophon is connecting his account to an earlier record of the battles between the two great antagonists, which is almost certainly that of Thucydides.

<sup>50</sup>Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, 14-21.





Thucydides.<sup>51</sup> The vagueness of the opening line of the *Hellenica* ("And after these things, not many days later...") together with its somewhat loose linkage with Thucydides may simply indicate that Xenophon does not want to draw a scrupulously exact, but rather a general, connection between his work and that of Thucydides. That Xenophon had a somewhat different historiographical approach than Thucydides need not deter us, for as Dillery shows, the later writer could very well have considered himself a continuator of the earlier while not feeling obligated to follow his methodology.<sup>52</sup>

The relationship between Xenophon and his historiographical predecessors is an important topic. Xenophon follows the methodology of Thucydides in a number of important areas. First, though it is unlikely that Xenophon, as author of the *Cyropaedia*, is scornful of the practice of recording the dimly remembered past (see Thuc. 1.21), his *Hellenica* is contemporary, like Thucydides'. In addition, it is doubtful that he has the same rigorous attitude as Thucydides toward the value of eyewitnesses (Thuc. 1.22), yet there is little question that he uses them for events at which he himself was not present. Xenophon also displays a similar interest in war and politics, for by far the greatest part of the

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<sup>51</sup>See Strauss, "Greek Historians: A Critical Study of W. P. Henry, *Greek Historical Writing. A Historiographical Essay Based on Xenophon's Hellenica*," *Review of Metaphysics* 21 (1968), 663, Vivienne Gray, "Continuous History and Xenophon," 211 and Simon Hornblower, "Introduction," in *Greek Historiography*, ed. Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 29-30.

<sup>52</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 9-16.



*Hellenica* is taken up with these things. Ethnography and women are almost entirely absent in the *Hellenica*.<sup>53</sup> Specific themes important to Thucydides are also taken up by Xenophon. Thucydides was very interested in the breakdown of law, morality and order such as occurred during the plague at Athens and the civil war at Corcyrea (2.53; 3.69-85, especially 84). This is a repeated concern of Xenophon as well, who records numerous civil and inter-state disorders connected with immorality and lawlessness, including the rule of the Thirty in Athens, and the civil disturbances in Corinth and Mantinea, to name just three (2.3.11-2.4.1; 4.4.1-14; 6.5.6-10). Disorder among the states of Greece, moreover, is the concluding theme of the *Hellenica* (7.5.27). Xenophon also shares the pessimistic view of his predecessor toward people and politics. Xenophon may not have expressed it as explicitly or starkly as Thucydides did in his famous maxim “it will always be thus, as long as the nature of humanity remains the same” (3.82.2), but the dark side of human nature certainly predominates in the *Hellenica*.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, Xenophon differs from Thucydides in a number of significant ways. First, he does not share Thucydides’ view of

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<sup>53</sup>Connor, “Historical Writing in the Fourth Century and in the Hellenistic Period,” 459, says that the *Hellenica* is Thucydidean in that it is “contemporary, political and austere.” Paul Cartledge, “Xenophon’s Women: A Touch of the Other,” in *Tria Lustra. Essays and Notes Presented to John Pinsent*, ed. H. D. Jocelyn with the assistance of Helena Hurt (Liverpool: Liverpool Classical Monthly, 1993): 5-14, especially 8, assumes that the *Hellenica* is predominantly Herodotean, but that with respect to his treatment (that is, neglect) of women he was Thucydidean, with the sole exception of the hyparchal satrap Mania (*Hell.* 3.1.10-14).

<sup>54</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 47, says of the *Hellenica*, “nobody is entirely in credit with the author for very long.”



historiographical limits. Thucydides intended to end his history at the defeat of Athens and the destruction of the long walls (5.26.1). Xenophon did not end his account at this point, but continued until the battle of Mantinea. Even at this point he shows no evidence that he considered it the job of a historian to cover one discrete event as Thucydides did, for he encourages someone else to pick up his theme now that he has finished (7.5.27). Second, Xenophon appears to directly contradict Thucydides' opinion that something is worthy of record because of its greatness (Thuc. 1.1). At 5.1.4, Xenophon seems to pick up on the ἀξιολογώτατον of Thuc.1.1.1 and says that the admiration that Teleutias' men had for him involved no expense, danger or artifice worthy of record (ἀξιόλογον), but that that it was something most worthy of record--more worthy than much money and many dangers (ἀξιολογώτατον). A related passage is 7.2.1, where Xenophon critiques "all the historians" (among whom Thucydides must be prominent) for recording the deeds of great cities but not small. Xenophon asserts that the fine deeds of small cities are in fact more worthy of record (μᾶλλον ἄξιον). I will discuss the implications of these two passages for Xenophon's own distinctive historiographical purpose below, but for now I record them to show that he protested against the Thucydidean standard of importance based on greatness. Third, Xenophon differs from Thucydides with respect to religious matters and the gods. Xenophon commonly records religious festivals, sacrifices, omens and



the role of the divine in historical events, Thucydides rarely.<sup>55</sup>

This last difference between Thucydides and Xenophon calls to mind the characteristics that Xenophon shares with Herodotus, for Xenophon's concern for religious issues is similar to that of Herodotus.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, Xenophon sometimes employs an anecdotal, discursive style reminiscent of Herodotus, and treats events which appear to be significant mainly for their human interest.<sup>57</sup> He also appears to echo the critical historiographical statement of Herodotus concerning large and small cities (Hdt.1.5.3-4) in his comments on the virtues of the city of Phlius (7.2.1). This comparison requires further investigation. Broadly speaking, Xenophon adopts the stated practice of his predecessor in that he records the deeds of the small city of Phlius (7.2.2-23). Yet in his justification for the practice he differs from Herodotus in that while Herodotus, because of the mutability of human fortune, intends to record the great deeds of cities both large and small indiscriminately, Xenophon believes that the great deeds of small cities

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<sup>55</sup>See Simon Hornblower, "The Religious Dimension to the Peloponnesian War, or, What Thucydides Does not Tell Us," *HSCP* 94 (1992): 169-97 and Gregory Crane, *The Blinded Eye. Thucydides and the New Written Word* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 163-208.

<sup>56</sup>See John Hart, *Herodotus and Greek History* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 27-44; K. H. Waters, *Herodotus the Historian. His Problems, Methods and Originality* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); John Gould, "Herodotus and Religion," in *Greek Historiography*, ed. Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994): 91-106; and now Thomas Harrison, *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>57</sup>See the stories of Eteonicus in Chios (2.1.1-5) and Dercydidas in Asia (3.1.8-28), for example.





are “more worthy” of record. Furthermore, Xenophon critiques “all the historians” for focussing exclusively on the deeds of great cities, indicating that if he has Herodotus in mind here, he is consciously distancing himself from him. Herodotus 1.5.3-4, in fact, is much more significant for its striking connection to the overall tone of the *Hellenica* than for its relationship to any specific passage within the work, for Xenophon too is acutely aware of the fleeting nature of human fortune, and the sudden reversals of great leaders like Alcibiades, Callicratidas, Lysander, Jason and Epaminondas in the *Hellenica* are strongly reminiscent of the fates of Croesus, Polycrates and Xerxes in Herodotus.

In spite of the similarities, however, Xenophon differs from Herodotus in a number of ways. For example, he does not exhibit the ethnographic interest that is so prominent in Herodotus, but is quite consistent in focussing on affairs from a Greek perspective.<sup>58</sup> As well, the overall tenor and purpose of Xenophon differs markedly from Herodotus. Herodotus’ theme is a positive one: the preservation of Greek freedom in the face of Persian expansionism through Greek virtue.<sup>59</sup> Xenophon’s is negative: the chronic disorder endemic to the states of Greece in spite of her wealth of great leaders. Herodotus’ *Histories* therefore comes as a much tidier package, with an introduction that

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<sup>58</sup>For the pervasively non-Greek perspective of Herodotus, see Henry Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland: American Philological Association, 1966) and Francois Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus. The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>59</sup>See Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, 17-45.



expresses his goal of preserving the great deeds of Greeks and barbarians, and a tidy conclusion (9.121) which brings the theme full circle.<sup>60</sup> Xenophon's work begins abruptly with no introduction at a point where the war between the Spartans and Athenians is shifting back and forth; it ends untidily too, for Xenophon simply stops after the battle of Mantinea with a comment upon the disorder in Greece and an invitation for someone else to pick up the narrative at this point (7.5.27).

In sum, though both Thucydides and Herodotus influenced Xenophon's *Hellenica* in a number of ways, neither provided Xenophon with an adequate historiographical model. The similarities with Herodotus and Thucydides suggest that Xenophon considered his work to be in the same genre as those two, but the divergencies, along with his explicit criticisms at 5.1.4 and 7.2.1, suggest that he saw his own work as taking a different direction and having a somewhat different purpose than his predecessors.

The lack of a clear statement of purpose at the beginning of the *Hellenica* together with the enigmatic nature of the work as a whole<sup>61</sup> has led to a wide spectrum of opinions about its basic purpose or main theme. The traditional modern view can be summed up broadly with the statement of Underhill that, though he failed quite badly in the attempt,

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<sup>60</sup>See Donald Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 44-50.

<sup>61</sup>Commenting on the enigmatic nature of the *Hellenica*, Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 1, calls it "a persistently odd work."



“Xenophon’s primary object was to write history on the grand scale like his predecessors, Herodotus and Thucydides.”<sup>62</sup> Hans Breitenbach emphasizes the importance of military leadership to the overall plan of the *Hellenica*.<sup>63</sup> Strauss contrasts the *Hellenica* with Xenophon’s *Symposium* in that while the latter preserves the noteworthy deeds of perfect gentlemen at play, the former preserves their serious deeds.<sup>64</sup> Higgins views the ironic “opposition of thought and reality, of speech and action” as the unifying concept of the *Hellenica*, particularly as it is manifest in the idea of the autonomy of the cities.<sup>65</sup> Gray contends that the *Hellenica*’s main purpose is the portrayal of virtue.<sup>66</sup> Tuplin holds that the *Hellenica*, at least from 2.3.10 on, is generally about ἀρχη in the Greek world and more specifically is a condemnation of the abuse of ἀρχη by the Spartan state during the time of its hegemony.<sup>67</sup> Some scholars despair of finding a single unifying theme and so hedge on the

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<sup>62</sup>Underhill, *Commentary on the Hellenica*, xii.

<sup>63</sup>Hans Rudolf Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons* (Freiburg in der Schweiz: Paulusdruckerei, 1950), 47-104.

<sup>64</sup>Leo Strauss, “Greek Historians,” 662.

<sup>65</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 99-127, especially 104-6.

<sup>66</sup>Gray, *The Character of Xenophon’s Hellenica*, especially 1-9.

<sup>67</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, see especially 34-36, 163-8.





topic. Rahn believes Xenophon began with the desire to record the rise and fall of a great city (Athens) but later changed his purpose, which then became (negatively) to outline the “disintegration of Hellenic political organization” and (positively) to highlight the exemplary doings of individuals and states great and small.<sup>68</sup> Peter Krentz holds that Xenophon wrote the *Hellenica* for instructional purposes with two main themes running through it: injustice leads to failure; and it is good to forgive and forget.<sup>69</sup> Dillery posits that Xenophon may well have had no central unifying issue in mind for the *Hellenica*,<sup>70</sup> but suggests that its fundamental message, if it has one, is contained in the speeches of Callistratus (6.3.10-17) and Procles (7.1.2-11) which advocate the shared hegemony of Sparta (on land) and Athens (by sea).<sup>71</sup>

My approach differs from the above in viewing the theme of disorder in the Greek world as the key concept which unifies the *Hellenica*.<sup>72</sup> Since there is no proper introduction to the *Hellenica* we

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<sup>68</sup>Rahn, “Xenophon’s Developing Historiography,” especially 508.

<sup>69</sup>Peter Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenica I-II.3.10. Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1989), 7.

<sup>70</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 11.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 16, 243-9.

<sup>72</sup>Other writers recognize disorder in the Greek world as a key concept in the *Hellenica*. Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 104, states that the entire *Hellenica* “is a history of repeated attempts at empire and the continual subversion of independence and order itself throughout the Greek world.” Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, writes, “one might argue that [at *Hell.* 7.5.26



must look elsewhere for indications of purpose and theme. Apart from a detailed analysis of the work as a whole, the best place to find such indications is in the conclusion (7.5.26-7). Here Xenophon says that contrary to the general expectation, there was no clear winner or loser after the battle of Mantinea. Rather there was more confusion and disorder in Greece after the battle than before. He then commends the job of continuing the record of Greece after Mantinea to someone else. So his final statement is a comment on the political confusion which prevailed in Greece. When he says that there was “even more” disorder after the battle than before, he clearly implies that Greek affairs before the battle--the precise affairs which the *Hellenica* recounts--are more than anything else characterized by confusion. This then is the purpose of the *Hellenica*: to explore the realities of the political confusion and turmoil in Greece from the point where Thucydides ended his record to the battle of Mantinea.<sup>73</sup> This perhaps explains why Xenophon takes exception to Thucydides’ standard of what is worthy of record (5.1.4;

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27]... Xenophon reveals the topic of confusion in the Greek world as a thematic preoccupation.” Dillery, *History of His Times*, 38, writes, “Xenophon was a man devoted to the principle of order, yet his age was disordered and confused... No more important point can be made about the *Hellenica* than that the bulk of it was probably composed after Xenophon had come to this realization.” These scholars, however, do not in practice apply the interpretative centrality of this idea to the *Hellenica*.

<sup>73</sup>The overall structure of the *Oeconomicus* is similar to the *Hellenica* with respect to statement of purpose. The *Oeconomicus* begins with a statement that gives it the appearance of being a continuation of some other work: “I once heard him also discussing household management in the following manner. . . .” (“Ἦκουσα δέ ποτε αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ οἰκονομίας τοιάδε διαλεγομένου . . .”). The major concern of the work is not made explicit until the very end (21.12), where Xenophon reveals that the essence of successful household management is the royal art of ruling over willing subjects.



7.2.1). Xenophon occasionally records incidents which do not involve any great danger, expenditure or strategem because they are examples of good order. He records the enthusiasm of Teleutias' men because Teleutias managed to make them enthusiastically obedient, that is, orderly. He records the faithfulness of Phlius in the midst of a general abandonment of Sparta because this is the sort of orderly attitude which prevents states from chaotically shifting allegiance (cf. 4.8.4-5). This also explains why Xenophon seems to go out of his way to highlight Polydamas of Pharsalus when his main concern is with Jason of Pherae (6.2.2-3): he is the eye of order in the storm of civil strife in his city. Therefore this focus on minor things does not mean that Xenophon is more interested in morality than in politics.<sup>74</sup> Such a dichotomy is unhelpful. "For any serious Greek thinker, moral issues and conflicts were an integral element in politics."<sup>75</sup> When Xenophon records these minor things, he does so because they have major political ramifications, since it is for want of things like faithfulness and obedience that Greece lacked a stable political order both within states and between them.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Pace Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, especially 8.

<sup>75</sup>M. I. Finley, *Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner with an introduction and notes by M. I. Finley (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 21.

<sup>76</sup>See Dillery, *History of His Times*, 17-38 for an excellent discussion of Xenophon's view of disorder in the light of his writings generally and in the broader context of fourth-century Greece.



## Characterization in the *Hellenica*

In this thesis I do not use the word characterization in any technical, literary sense. By characterization I simply mean the general manner in which Xenophon portrays individual historical figures. The only scholarly item which deals exclusively with Xenophon's treatment of individuals in the *Hellenica* is an article by H. D. Westlake.<sup>77</sup> Westlake's approach is "to examine a single element of the work, its treatment of leading individuals" in order to show that Xenophon's criteria for assessing individuals "are basically unsound."<sup>78</sup> In other words, he examines Xenophon's presentation of individuals in order to make a wider point about Xenophon's approach to historiography. In broad terms, my purpose is similar. More specifically, I aim to show that Xenophon's portrayal of individuals is determined by, and therefore best understood in light of, his overall purpose to explore the reasons for Greek political instability.

Although Westlake is alone in focussing his attention exclusively on Xenophon's presentation of individuals, many have touched on this topic in more general works. Commentators have often assumed that Xenophon's characterizations are straightforward things, simplistically determined by certain biases he is presumed to have: Callicratidas is

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<sup>77</sup>H. D. Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*," *Bull. Rylands Libr.* 49 (1966): 246-69.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 248.





favourably portrayed, according to this approach, because of his panhellenism which Xenophon shares; Agesilaus is positively presented because of Xenophon's uncritical admiration of Sparta and personal friendship with the king; Epaminondas and Pelopidas are largely ignored out of spite for their role in the Theban overthrow of Spartan hegemony.<sup>79</sup> Other scholars hold that the characters in the *Hellenica* are presented mainly so as to highlight their positive virtues. Some emphasize Xenophon's interest in the portrayal of the ideal military commander.<sup>80</sup> Westlake follows this approach and concludes that Xenophon's criteria for evaluating politico-military leaders are unsound because they are too narrowly based on Xenophon's own experience as a battalion commander.<sup>81</sup> This approach, however, is too narrow for it clearly cannot do justice to those characters who are mainly political and not military leaders (for example, Critias, Theramenes and Euphron), nor does it adequately account for the broader political implications of the actions of many of the military leaders that Xenophon treats. Some apply this portrayal-of-virtue principle more widely and believe that Xenophon also emphasizes such traits as

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<sup>79</sup>See, for example, Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 33-43.

<sup>80</sup>Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons* and Peter Krafft, "Vier Beispiele des Xenophontischen in Xenophons Hellenika," *Rh. Mus.* 110 (1967), 103-50.

<sup>81</sup>Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*."



friendship and faithfulness in his characters.<sup>82</sup> The problem with this tack is that it does not adequately account for the persistently negative cast of many of the characters in the *Hellenica*.<sup>83</sup> Dillery makes a helpful contribution to the discussion with his observation that “the individual is also emblematic of deep forces at work in the history of the age.” More to the point he suggests that actions and motives of an individual can form an enlightening contrast to the social unit to which he belongs (for example, Socrates to democratic Athens) or can closely reflect in his own character that of his city (for example, Agesilaus, who mirrors in his own life both the virtues and the failings of Sparta).<sup>84</sup> This aspect of Xenophon’s approach to character can be seen throughout the *Hellenica*.

Many have observed that personalities carry the point of the *Hellenica* to a very great degree.<sup>85</sup> This being true, it is likely that the

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<sup>82</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon’s Hellenica*, 178 and throughout.

<sup>83</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 165, writes, “There are actually *no* heroes in *Hellenica*--or none that last as such for very long.” Tuplin is a little too negative, in my opinion, for I would argue that that characters such as Thrasybulus and Epaminondas appear in an almost completely positive light in the *Hellenica*.

<sup>84</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 249-50. See also Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 108, who writes, “Xenophon observes... that *poleis* acting individually do not always act from motives radically different from those of individual citizens.”

<sup>85</sup>Westlake, “Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*,” 248; Hindley, “Eros and Military Command in Xenophon,” 347; Dillery, *History of His Times*, 250-1. Grayson, “Did Xenophon Intend to Write History?” 37, also acknowledges that Xenophon allows a greater part for individuals than other historians, although he goes on to say (mistakenly in my opinion), “It is difficult, however, to feel that the motives and characters of Xenophon’s individuals ever form an integral part of his historical narrative.”



presentation of leading figures will largely reflect the theme of the work as a whole. The major point of this dissertation, therefore, is to show how the presentation of prominent Greek leaders reflects the theme of political disorder and confusion in Greece. Xenophon repeatedly portrays these leading figures as tremendously gifted in various ways, yet incapable of bringing stability either to their own states or to Greece as a whole. Sometimes the narrative points to personal inabilities, sometimes to moral shortcomings, as the reason for the failure of a leader. Sometimes the inabilities and/or shortcomings of a leader are very few indeed, yet such individuals too fail to bring achieve a settled political order. In these cases the divine is often put forward by explicit statement or hint as the source of the failure. Xenophon's treatment of his characters in this regard suggests that he did not have a single, simple answer to what he perceived to be a complex problem. Judging from Xenophon's portrayal of the leading figures among the Greeks, the main purpose of the *Hellenica*, is not simply to explore why political stability in Greece was so elusive, but why it remained so in the face of such outstanding human resources of leadership in the realm of war and politics.

Some justification for my choice of individuals to cover is in order. From among the Athenians I will treat Alcibiades, Theramenes and Thrasybulus; from the Spartans, Lysander and Agesilaus; from other states, Jason and Epaminondas. My basic criterion for inclusion of a character is prominence in the narrative. Some are therefore included





because they are prominent in a large portion of the narrative. It is reasonable to expect that the more material we have on a character, the easier it will be to get a clear picture of what Xenophon is doing in his treatment of that character. Theramenes, Thrasybulus, Lysander and Agesilaus obviously fall into this category. It might be protested, however, that Alcibiades, Jason and Epaminondas (whom I will cover individually) are not treated much, if at all, more extensively than Conon, Iphicrates or Dercylidas (whom I will not cover individually). Yet Alcibiades, Jason and Epaminondas have a prominence by their position in the narrative more than from the amount of material in which they appear. Alcibiades is the first Greek leader that receives Xenophon's attention, and his dramatic entry (and exit) make it clear that he holds a certain importance in Xenophon's mind. Epaminondas, similarly, is prominent by virtue of being the last leader highlighted in the *Hellenica*; moreover, his portrayal is distinctive and emphatic in and of itself.<sup>86</sup> There is a certain prominence to Jason as well by his position, for to record his accomplishments Xenophon makes two special departures from his narrative, which mainly treats the affairs of Sparta and the Peloponnese. If it appears that many significant Greek figures are excluded by my decisions, it should be noted that a good number of these individuals will be covered under the treatment of the main characters. This, I believe, is fitting since Xenophon frequently brings out the traits

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<sup>86</sup>See Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*," 257-9.



of one individual by comparing and/or contrasting him with another. Thus I will comment extensively on Critias in the section on Theramenes, on Callicratidas under Lysander, on Euphron under Jason, on Pelopidas under Epaminondas. Of Persian characters, Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus will receive secondary treatment in the sections on Alcibiades and Agesilaus, for both are used to bring out certain aspects of the characters of these two Greek leaders. I will not treat any Persian characters separately, however, since none is the prime focus in the narrative for long.

### **Thesis Summary and Outline**

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore Xenophon's treatment of individual leaders in his *Hellenica*. The nature of Xenophon's characterizations, however, are best understood in the context of the overall purpose of the *Hellenica*, which is, as I have argued, to explore the reasons for Greek political instability in the times of the author. Individual Greek leaders are important to this purpose since they are the ones whom Xenophon looked to to solve the political problems of Greece. Xenophon seems consistently to treat his characters according to this question: why was it that, in spite of the many brilliant leaders that Greece produced during this period, she was never able to find a stable political order. Often Xenophon's characters have moral shortcomings or personal incapacities which can explain the question. Yet sometimes a leader displays few if any faults and yet he too--



inexplicably from a human point of view--fails. I will show how many of the enigmas of Xenophon's characterizations and indeed of the *Hellenica* as a whole can be cleared up by this perspective.

The main focus of the first two books of the *Hellenica* is on Athens. This section ends with the establishment of a stable political order in the city, and so we should view the action of the whole section as pointing somehow in this direction. The narrative is dominated by three Athenian leaders: Alcibiades, Theramenes and Thrasybulus. The *Hellenica* opens with the war between Athens and Sparta in much uncertainty and confusion; no side seems to have the upper hand, or even the potential to gain the upper hand. Alcibiades soon makes his appearance and with his energy and brilliance looks certain to bring victory to the Athenians. He seems, however, to depend on his own personal brilliance and, neglecting to build rapport with those whom he leads, is cashiered by the Athenians. Athens loses the war in part because of the loss of his brilliance. While Alcibiades is mainly a military figure in the *Hellenica*, Theramenes is a political one. He is a very gifted politician, convincing and effective, but uses his talents for self-serving ends. He shares a significant part of the responsibility for the fall of Athens because to protect himself he leads the movement to have the victorious Arginusae generals condemned; this leaves the leadership in the field to those of lesser ability, which results in the devastating loss at Aegospotami. Theramenes is also responsible for the turmoil within the city that follows upon her fall, for his actions as one of the Thirty shows little



concern for law, justice and constitutionality, which alone could bring about stability. Thrasybulus is the great hero of the restoration of the democracy. He is a leader of great ability and virtue in both war and politics. By his military prowess he ends the tyranny of the oligarchs; by his concern for reconciliation, justice and constitutionality he brings about a lasting political order to Athens. He dies later in the vain and perhaps unjust attempt to restore the glory of Athens on the international scene through military means.

From the beginning of Book Three until 5.3.27, the Spartans are unquestionably dominant. Throughout this period, however, Sparta falls short of being an ideal *hegemon*. There are indications throughout that in spite of many strengths and virtues, she has a hard time keeping her restive allies in line, and often finds herself the author of oppression and injustice. This pattern is observed in individual Spartan leaders as well. Lysander in certain ways is the Spartan equivalent of Alcibiades, appearing on the scene when his state is doing poorly, but quickly turning the tide. He comes into the story at the point of Alcibiades' eclipse, and is partially responsible for it. And he is victorious where Alcibiades fails, for his prodigious talents take his state to preeminence at the battle of Aegospotami. The essential question about Lysander then is how effective he will be in leading his state into a stable and just hegemony. Here he fails mainly because he strives for power beyond proper boundaries, conflicting with the established laws of Sparta and clashing with the established authorities, especially the kings. One





might expect Agesilaus to have the abilities required to bring about a fair and stable order to Greece: he is just, pious, courageous, militarily astute, obedient to the laws and magistrates, solicitous toward subordinates and allies. He seems, however, to have a certain narrowness of vision. He increasingly gets caught up in minor affairs, while neglecting the greater. He allows petty concerns and personal affronts to cloud his sense of justice and generosity. With him in command the greatness of Sparta contracts as the glory of her most prominent leader shrinks.

From 5.4.1 to the end of the *Hellenica*, Xenophon records the dissolution of the Spartan *hegemony*. During this period other states, most notably Thebes, rise to the fore and challenge Sparta for supremacy. During this last section of his work Xenophon mainly concentrates on the ongoing strife between Thebes and Sparta, but he makes a number of digressions, the most remarkable of which reports on Jason of Pherae (6.1; 6.4.20-37). The activities of Jason do not actually impinge greatly upon the affairs of Greece as a whole, but Xenophon highlights this ruler of Thessaly to show what great potential he has for becoming *hegemon* of all Greece. He is prodigious in personal and military strength, in political savvy and in ambition. His sudden and violent demise cannot be directly attributed to any mistake or failure on his part, but the narrative suggests that it has something to do with the activity of the divine. Divine activity becomes even more prominent in the failure of the great Theban leader Epaminondas. Perhaps more than



any other leader recorded in the *Hellenica* he has the panoply of political and military skills necessary to gain hegemony for his state over all the Greeks. Yet he too fails, and that, apparently, because of the will of the gods. As Xenophon tries to make sense of the political realities of his world he struggles with the reasons why, with so many outstandingly gifted leaders, Greece failed to reach a stable and just political arrangement. He is caught between the poles of human and divine causality. Both are obviously significant, but in the end he decides that the inexplicable and therefore the divine element is ultimately determinative.



CHAPTER ONE  
ATHENIAN INDIVIDUALS

**Introduction**

The first two books of the *Hellenica* are dominated by a concern for Athens. A major interest is, of course, the fall of Athens and her loss of Empire. But this is not Xenophon's main concern, for he continues to focus on Athens even after her fall, until she finds a stable political order in the restoration of the democracy under Thrasybulus. A small number of dominant personalities control the events of this period. Alcibiades in his arrogance and Theramenes with his cunning are both largely responsible--the former militarily and the latter politically--for the fall of the city. Theramenes and Critias are responsible for the terrible internal turmoil that wracked the city after its fall, for though they display contrasting personalities--the former sly and devious, the latter blunt and forthright--they both are lawless tyrants. Thrasybulus is the one outstanding hero of the democratic resistance who with his piety, justice, courage and discipline embodies the best of the Demos and restores stability and a just order to the polis through the renewal of the ancestral constitution. Yet he is not able to bring the same order to the broader political context for he also embodies the somewhat foolish international ambitions of the restored democracy which later led to his death.





## Alcibiades

Xenophon portrays Alcibiades as a singular figure in both his abilities and attitude. He enters the narrative suddenly and spectacularly with great effect on the war. When he appears the war is stalemated; he quickly gives the Athenians the clear upper hand. His outstanding military successes lay the groundwork for an astonishing political ascent, for almost overnight he goes from being an exile to a general with an extraordinary command. His fall, however, is swifter than his rise, for he is suddenly cashiered by the Athenians in response to his first defeat. His major flaw is directly related to his outstanding character, for he appears to stand above νόμος<sup>1</sup> and apart from other people. In the end he is a politically destructive factor in the city (for he polarizes the citizens of Athens) and in the war (for the Athenians lose the battle of Aegospotami because he makes his good counsel unpalatable to them).

Xenophon begins the *Hellenica* in the middle of the naval war between Athens and Sparta in 411 B. C. He employs no formal introduction, but the impression he gives is clear: the war was going nowhere. The Spartans won a nondescript naval battle (1.1.1); the Athenians drove a Spartan force to shore, but accomplished nothing

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<sup>1</sup>The semantic range of this Greek term includes both "convention, custom" and "law, ordinance" (s.v. *LSJ*) and I use it, rather than an English equivalent, because we observe Alcibiades sometimes contravening conventional practice (as in the appointment of Antiochus, see below, pp. 56-7) and sometimes flaunting institutional laws (as in his accepting command of Athenian forces though legally an exile, below, p. 44-5).



(1.1.2-3); the two antagonists then fought a battle which continued all day with little likelihood of either side winning a decisive victory (1.1.4-5). Xenophon's history, it seems, begins where it ends: in confusion and disorder with no clear hegemonic winner (cf. 7.5.26-27).<sup>2</sup> Into the midst of this confusion sailed Alcibiades. Xenophon makes Alcibiades' entrance dramatic by using an historic present (ἐπεισπλεῖ) in a context entirely of past tenses.<sup>3</sup> He also emphasizes the contrast between the earlier indecisiveness of the battle and the swiftness of the Athenian victory upon the arrival of Alcibiades: "With the Athenians winning on some fronts and losing on others, Alcibiades sails up with 18 ships. Thereupon the Peloponnesians fled to Abydos" (1.1.5-6).<sup>4</sup> "The details leave us with the vivid impression of how Alcibiades, entering the scene like a whirlwind, has in effect turned the tide in the war almost single-handed."<sup>5</sup> This battle resulted in a significant victory for the Athenians: they took thirty enemy ships and recovered those of their own that they had previously lost (1.1.7). Xenophon's account of this battle

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<sup>2</sup>See Strauss, "Greek Historians," 661.

<sup>3</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenica I-II.3.10*, 91.

<sup>4</sup>καὶ τὰ μὲν νικῶντων, τὰ δὲ νικωμένων, Ἀλκιβιάδης ἐπεισπλεῖ δυοῖν δεούσαις εἴκοσι ναυσίν. ἐντεῦθεν δὲ φυγὴ τῶν Πελοποννησίων ἐγένετο πρὸς τὴν Ἀβυδον. Strauss, "Greek Historians," 664, writes "One may even find [the first two pages of the *Hellenica*] confused-imitating, as it were, the confusion of a war whose outcome has not yet been decided. Then suddenly the mist and darkness is pierced by a flash of lightning: Alcibiades himself appears."

<sup>5</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 3.



exaggerates the magnitude of the Athenian victory as compared to Diodorus', for the latter records only ten ships captured because of a sudden storm which prevented the Athenians from capitalizing on their initial success (Diod. Sic. 13.46.2-6). Does Xenophon play up the Athenian success here for some reason?<sup>6</sup> Krentz holds that Xenophon wishes to portray Alcibiades in a positive light for "as is commonly recognized, Xenophon treats Alcibiades favorably throughout the *Hellenika*."<sup>7</sup> This, however, is not quite the point. Xenophon is not ultimately favourable to Alcibiades either in the *Hellenica* (as we shall see) or in his other writings.<sup>8</sup> Xenophon is mainly concerned with Alcibiades as a man of extraordinary abilities, whose powers were so

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<sup>6</sup>Peter Krentz, "Xenophon and Diodorus on the Battle of Abydos," *AHB* 3 (1989) 10-14, argues that Diodorus' account is more plausible than that of Xenophon.

<sup>7</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 91. So also J. Hatzfeld, *Alcibiade* (Paris: Presses Universitaires du France, 1940), 315.

<sup>8</sup>In *Mem.* 1.2.12-47, Xenophon defends Socrates against accusations stemming from his association with Critias and Alcibiades. The accuser of Socrates says, "Critias and Alcibiades, being associates of Socrates, did the city the greatest harm, for Critias was the most rapacious and violent of all those in the oligarchy, and Alcibiades in turn was the most intemperate, insolent and violent of all those in the democracy" (1.2.12). Xenophon is in sympathy with this opinion of Critias and Alcibiades, for he writes, "If those two did any evil to the city, I will not defend them." Here he uses an aorist indicative verb with εἰ in the protasis and a future indicative verb in the apodosis, indicating that he has no desire to cast any doubt upon these suppositions. He goes on to speak of how Alcibiades and Critias were entirely out of sympathy with Socrates and only associated with him to gain abilities which would help them dominate the state (1.2.14-16). He characterizes them as corrupt and ὑπερφάνω (1.2.24-25). Gray, *The Framing of Socrates*, 48-50, suggests that Xenophon pillories rather than defends Alcibiades and Critias simply for rhetorical purposes, because his defense of Socrates is strengthened by emphasizing their corruption. Yet even if it is true that in effect the condemnation of Alcibiades strengthened Xenophon's argument, it is highly unlikely that Xenophon suppressed his own opinion of Alcibiades for the sake of the argument. It is much more likely that his true (negative) opinion of Alcibiades (and Critias) suggested the direction of the argument.





outstanding that he held the hope of restoring Athens to her former power and glory, in spite of the fact that she was otherwise floundering in her war efforts. The successes of Alcibiades should be seen in the light of *Hellenica* 1.4.20 where the Athenians voted Alcibiades supreme commander ὡς οἷός τε ὦν σῶσαι τὴν προτέραν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν.<sup>9</sup>

Xenophon's narrative continues to accentuate the outstanding abilities of Alcibiades by focussing on both the magnitude of his successes and the formidable obstacles that stood in the way of these successes. Despite the victory at Abydos the Athenians were seriously short of resources: it was necessary for all the ships save forty to leave the Hellespont to collect money, and Thrasyllus went off to Athens to request another army and more ships (1.1.8). Tissaphernes' arrival in the Hellespont exacerbated the problem, for he had come, so he claimed, with orders from the king to make war on the Athenians. When Alcibiades attempted to make an alliance with him (no doubt to get Persian money for the maintenance of the fleet) he was thrown in prison (1.1.9). This incident might appear at first glance to indicate that Alcibiades was somewhat foolhardy and inept in putting himself in such jeopardy, but I believe Xenophon has something else in mind. Tissaphernes' policy--one he adopted on the advice of Alcibiades himself--was to play the Spartans and Athenians off against each other so that

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<sup>9</sup>That many Athenians viewed Alcibiades as their greatest hope for the salvation of the city through this difficult period see Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1422-5 and Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 38:1-4.





neither would be strong enough to threaten the King of Persia (Thuc. 8.46, 56; see also *Hell.* 1.5.9). Following this policy, Tissaphernes had earlier been lukewarm in helping the Spartans (Thuc. 8.56-7).<sup>10</sup> Now that Alcibiades was on the scene, however, things had turned around such that Tissaphernes (and Darius) perceived that the Athenians had the upper hand. Xenophon presents Alcibiades as responsible for the Athenian resurgence and his imprisonment by Tissaphernes highlights this.

But Alcibiades was not the sort of man to be easily detained and soon escaped by night with Mantitheus--on horseback no less<sup>11</sup>--to Clazomenae. At the same time the Athenians were hard-pressed by Mindarus (who had 60 ships against their 40), for they were compelled to escape by night to Cardia (1.1.10-11).<sup>12</sup> Xenophon makes special note of the vessels with Alcibiades: he came to Tissaphernes with a single trireme, but now he has five and a skiff as well. Who but Alcibiades could have increased his resources more than five-fold in the course of a

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<sup>10</sup>See also Thuc. 8.29, 45, 85, where Hermocrates the Syracusan speaks out against Tissaphernes' stinginess toward the Spartans and allies, which is most likely the background against which we should read the reference to Hermocrates' denunciation of Tissaphernes at *Hell.* 1.1.31.

<sup>11</sup>The use of the word εὐπορέω (ἵππων εὐπορησάντες) points to his resourcefulness, for he did not just escape on horseback but he (together with Mantitheus) "finds a way" to obtain horses.

<sup>12</sup>Xenophon seems to connect the escape of the Athenian fleet from Mindarus with that of Alcibiades from Tissaphernes: he describes the latter as νυκτὸς ἀπέδρασαν εἰς Κλαζομένας and the former as νυκτὸς ἀπέδρασαν εἰς Καρδίαν.



dangerous escape? Even the skiff (ἐπακτρίς) has significance: Alcibiades is careful to marshall every resource, however small, to increase the Athenian war effort.

With Alcibiades' arrival the Athenian navy stopped retreating and became the aggressor. Learning that the Peloponnesians had set sail for Cyzicus, Alcibiades cut across to Sestus on foot. Xenophon highlights the relentless forward movement of Alcibiades with specific references to his diverse modes of travel: by horse from Sardis, by ship from Clazomenae to Cardia, by foot to Sestus. Alcibiades took strong charge of the Athenian force. He ordered the fleet to sail around to meet him at Sestus (1.1.11). When Theramenes and Thrasybulus unexpectedly sailed in just as the main force was preparing to set out against the Spartans from Sestus, Alcibiades told them to store their main sails (in preparation for battle<sup>13</sup>) and follow him--though they were duly elected generals and he was officially an exile. When battle was at hand, Alcibiades called an assembly of his men and gave a forceful exhortation: they must fight by ship, on land, and on the walls, for they had no money while the enemy had unlimited from the king (1.1.14). He had already proclaimed (ἐπεκήρυξε) that anyone caught sailing across to the other side would be put to death (1.1.15).

This passage highlights not only the forceful leadership of Alcibiades, but also the diligence with which he ensured the secrecy of

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<sup>13</sup>See 6.2.27.



the expedition. The Athenians had sailed to Proconnesus by cover of night. Once there Alcibiades gathered together all the boats, even the small ones, under his own personal supervision (συνθροίσε παρ' ἑαυτον) to ensure that the enemy not learn their number (1.1.15). Finally they set out for battle in the heavy rain, which would hide their approach from the enemy (1.1.16). Alcibiades' good fortune also seems to be a significant aspect of this account: as they drew near to Cyzicus, the skies suddenly cleared revealing the Peloponnesian ships exercising far from the harbour, cut off by the Athenians.<sup>14</sup> The earlier providential appearance at Sestus of Theramenes and Thrasybulus just at the point of Alcibiades' departure is also relevant in this regard.<sup>15</sup> We need not conclude here that Xenophon pictures Alcibiades as a pious, virtuous soul who has earned the favour of the gods, for Xenophon is sometimes quite vague about the workings of the divine.<sup>16</sup> The effect rather is to suggest simply that Alcibiades was outstanding too in the level of divine help that he apparently received. Xenophon states that at the appearance of the Athenian fleet, the Peloponnesians noticed that the

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<sup>14</sup>For favourable weather, especially that which results in victory in battle, as a sign of divine favour in the *Hellenica* see the snowstorm which preserved Thrasybulus at Phyle (2.4.3 and comment at 2.4.14).

<sup>15</sup>Xenophon often links fortuitous circumstances with the action of the divine. See especially *An.* 5.2.24-25, where Xenophon says that θεῶν τις provided the means of salvation for the Greeks in a particularly difficult situation and that he himself discovered this means παρὰ τῆς τύχης. See also Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 136-7.

<sup>16</sup>See especially the apparently incoherent activity of the divine in 7.5.8-13, 26.





Law, for he assumes command without mandate from the city. Xenophon deftly employs the examples of Pharnabazus and especially Hermocrates to contrast positively with Alcibiades' shortcomings. After the Spartan defeat at Cyzicus, Pharnabazus was generous, positive and congenial as he encouraged the Peloponnesians and allies to shake off their despair (1.1.24-26). Pharnabazus' encouragement should be read in the light of Alcibiades' stern treatment of his men in 1.1.14-15. Hermocrates the Syracusan provides an even more pointed contrast to Alcibiades.<sup>19</sup> He, like Alcibiades, was exiled by his home government while abroad on active service.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he claimed that his exile was unjust (1.1.27), as did Alcibiades (1.4.20). But though his situation was virtually identical to that of Alcibiades, his response was quite different. When Alcibiades was exiled--in fact even in anticipation of his exile--he betrayed his city and worked against her (Thuc. 6.74, 6.88-93);<sup>21</sup> Hermocrates, on the other hand, raised a force of mercenaries and triremes and continued to serve his city's cause by providing help to the

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<sup>19</sup>Thucydides (8.85) seems to place the exile of Hermocrates in 411 B. C., a year earlier than Xenophon. Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika* I-II.3.10, 102, asserts that Xenophon's chronology is simply wrong. My interpretation of the Hermocrates episode provides a clear motive for Xenophon's chronological misplacement of the event. (But see H. D. Westlake, "Hermocrates the Syracusan," *Bull. Rylands Libr.* 41 [1958-59] 239-68 who argues that Thucydides refers proleptically to the event and that Xenophon's chronology is correct.)

<sup>20</sup>For the account of Alcibiades' exile while he was a general in the Sicilian expedition, see Thuc. 6.61.

<sup>21</sup>That Xenophon was aware, and assumed a general knowledge, of the betrayal of his city by Alcibiades is clear from *Hell.* 1.4.15.



Spartans (1.1.31, 1.3.13). Alcibiades took command of the Athenian forces in the Aegean, though he was officially an exile; as soon as Hermocrates heard the news of his exile, he instructed his men to elect new commanders immediately--even before the replacement generals should arrive from home--, and insisted that he and his fellow generals must not rebel against their own city by holding on to their command as the men were demanding (1.1.27-28). Finally, whereas Alcibiades was imperious and stern with his men and the other commanders, Hermocrates was friendly, congenial and responsive to everyone. As a result of Hermocrates' friendliness he was very popular with his men and highly regarded in the council-chamber (1.1.29-31).<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Hermocrates, the breadth and strength of Alcibiades' popularity was very much an open question. We should not trivialize the shortcomings of Alcibiades which are shown up by the example of Hermocrates, for elsewhere in his writings Xenophon displays a keen interest in the importance of collegiality and strict legality.<sup>23</sup>

Thrasyllus takes the focal position as commander of the Athenians in the narrative from 1.1.32 to 1.2.14. He had his successes and failures, but suffered a major defeat at Ephesus because of his own

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<sup>22</sup>Compare also Xenophon's portrayal of Teleutias, who was highly popular with his troops largely as a result of his friendliness to them (5.1.3-4, 13-18).

<sup>23</sup>For legality, see *Mem.* 4.4.1-25, *Cyr.* 1.3.16-17; for collegiality, see *An.* 4.3.10, *Cyr.* 2.1.30.



tardiness and poor strategy.<sup>24</sup> When he joined Alcibiades at Lampsacus, Alcibiades' troops expressed reluctance to join with those of Thrasyllus since they themselves were undefeated while the newcomers had arrived fresh from a major military setback (1.2.15). This incident reminds the reader again of the uninterrupted success of Alcibiades and his clear superiority over the other Athenian generals. Perhaps more significant, however, is the attitude of Alcibiades' soldiers. They seem to have adopted a condescending attitude toward others which was characteristic of their commander. Moreover, they established their appreciation of others (and of themselves) on the basis of military success alone. The importance of this fact for Alcibiades himself will become clear when the confidence of the army immediately disappears at his first military setback (1.5.17). Again it appears that Alcibiades was building a very inadequate base of support.

In this chapter (1.2) Xenophon continues to emphasize the singular accomplishments of Alcibiades, but he also adds an ominous note. When Thrasyllus captured four Syracusan ships off Methymna, he sent all the captives to Athens except a certain Athenian named Alcibiades, whom he ordered stoned (1.2.13). Xenophon carefully describes this man as a cousin to (the famous) Alcibiades and a fellow

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<sup>24</sup>Tissaphernes found out about Thrasyllus' plan to attack Ephesus and was given plenty of time to prepare for the attack since it took the Athenians seventeen days to get there from Lydia. Once at Ephesus, Thrasyllus divided his troops into two, positioning each division on opposite sides of the city, which allowed the Ephesians to attack and defeat each separately (1.2.6-10).





exile with him (Ἀλκιβιάδου ὄντα ἀνεπιὸν καὶ συμφυγάδα). This man's triple link with our Alcibiades (name, family and exile) and his summary execution, leads us to wonder at the security of the man's namesake. This passage is a reminder that the Athenians are generally quick to condemn their own who are implicated in military setbacks.<sup>25</sup> That this Alcibiades was condemned suggests the same could easily happen to the other with whom he is so closely linked.<sup>26</sup>

In the next year Alcibiades was again acting as if he were in sole command, ordering the Athenian forces as he saw fit (1.3.3). The ploy of the Chalcedonians to get their property out of the reach of the Athenians was wholly ineffective against Alcibiades: he went straight to Bithynian Thrace (where the property had been sent) and forced the Bithynians to hand it over. Returning to Chalcedon, he besieged the city. His role in the battle here is strikingly similar to that at the battles of Abydos

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<sup>25</sup>This Alcibiades, here with the Syracusan fleet, had undoubtedly fought with the Syracusans against the Athenians at Ephesus. As an historical fact, Thrasylus may have had Alcibiades executed more because he was a traitor than for his participation in the battle of Ephesus. Yet the narrative, with its close juxtaposition of the Athenian defeat at Ephesus and the execution of Alcibiades, gives the impression that the two incidents are related in the way I have described.

<sup>26</sup>The only other certain case of stoning in Athenian history is that of Lycides, who was stoned by his fellow Athenians for the traitorous act of suggesting that Mardonius' offer of capitulation should be brought to the Demos (Hdt. 9.5). Vincent J. Rosivach, "Execution by Stoning in Athens," *Cl. Ant.* 6 (1987): 232-248, suggests that because actual stoning was so rare in ancient Greece and because Lycides' stoning was the only one remembered by the Athenians in their patriotic history, it "colored the subsequent Athenian perception of stoning in general" (p. 245). With regard to Xenophon's account of the stoning of Alcibiades he writes, "The parallels between the crimes of the two and their common fate are clear enough to suggest that Alcibiades' stoning was patterned...on that of Lycides" (p. 246). If this is true, then the fact that Lycides' punishment spilled over to his relatives is not irrelevant to the case of our Alcibiades, who was swiftly deposed by the Demos after the Athenian defeat at Notium (1.5.16).





(1.1.5) and Cyzicus, for after the battle had gone on for a long time, apparently stalemated, Alcibiades suddenly appeared,<sup>27</sup> killed the opposing general and routed the opposition. After this Alcibiades again sailed off to the Hellespont and the Chersonese in order to raise money (1.3.2-8). Not only did he raise money, but he also took the city of Selymbria and, true to form, returned to Byzantium having increased his military resources by the whole mass of the army of the people of the Chersonese and by soldiers and more than 300 cavalrymen of Thrace (1.3.9-10).

The narrative next presents Alcibiades as one who again stands out from everyone else. When Alcibiades left Chalcedon to raise money in the Hellespont and Chersonese, the other Athenian generals came to an agreement with Pharnabazus that he would pay them 20 talents and take ambassadors up to the king. In return, they agreed to preserve Chalcedon. Oaths were exchanged that the Chalcedonians should pay tribute to Athens, and that the Athenians not make war on Chalcedon until the ambassadors returned from the king (1.3.8-9). Because Alcibiades was not present at the original oathtaking, Pharnabazus thought it necessary that he too should take the oath (1.3.10-11). Even this Persian satrap, it appears, recognized the special status of Alcibiades. Alcibiades insisted that he would not swear to Pharnabazus unless the oath was reciprocal. In the end, each swore to the

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<sup>27</sup>Where he had gone off to, Xenophon does not say. The impression of his restlessness pervades the narrative.



representatives of the other to abide by the oath previously sworn about Chalcedon. In addition, they made personal pledges each to the other (1.3.11-12). Alcibiades was manifestly doing more than simply including himself with the other generals as participant in the original agreement.

The outcome of this exchange with Pharnabazus shows again how Alcibiades stood apart from others, now in his attitude that he need not abide by his sworn oaths. Pharnabazus immediately began to fulfill his end of the bargain (1.3.13), but the actions of Alcibiades were not as straightforward. In 1.3.14 Xenophon contrasts the actions of Pharnabazus with those of the Athenians in the aftermath of the oaths: “And Pharnabazus was leading these [ambassadors], but the Athenians, having built a wall around Byzantium, were besieging it and were making attacks against the fortifications at long range and up close.”<sup>28</sup> Translators seem to assume that there is little contrast implied in the μέν... δέ construction here.<sup>29</sup> But context suggests otherwise: Pharnabazus was fulfilling his part of the deal by leading the ambassadors to the king, but the Athenians were making an all out effort (with a wall of circumvallation, and attacks at long and short range) to capture Byzantium. Now of course the agreement was, strictly

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<sup>28</sup>καὶ Φαρνάβαζος μὲν τούτους ἤγεν· οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι τὸ Βυζάντιον ἐπολιόρκουν περιτειχίσαντες, καὶ πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος ἀκροβολισμούς καὶ προσβολὰς ἐποιοῦντο.

<sup>29</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 37: “So Pharnabazus was conducting these ambassadors, and the Athenians continued the siege of Byzantium”; Rex Warner, *History of My Times*, 67: “Pharnabazus then set out with his party, and the Athenians went on with the siege of Byzantium.”



speaking, only about Chalcedon, but Byzantium was right across the narrow Bosphorus, and the two were often viewed as a single geographic or administrative entity.<sup>30</sup> So if to attack Byzantium was not breaking the letter, it was surely breaking the spirit, of the oaths. This, I suggest, is an example of Xenophon's keen interest in *de facto* oathbreaking.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the Athenians obviously sent their ambassadors to the king not to negotiate some limited agreement about the city of Chalcedon, but to work out a broader understanding concerning the war as a whole.<sup>32</sup> So in attacking Byzantium now, the Athenians were apparently trying to get every advantage over the Spartans and Persians--in spite of the treaty--in case their embassy to the king turned out badly. Furthermore, Alcibiades had sworn personal oaths to Pharnabazus, and even if Byzantium itself was not under Pharnabazus' direct control, it would certainly be considered by him a looming threat to the other shore of the Bosphorus if held by the Athenians. And, though Xenophon makes "the

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<sup>30</sup>Xenophon links these two cities together at the beginning of this episode even though it might seem that engagements at Chalcedon are not inextricably linked with those of Byzantium: ἐκεῖθεν δ' ἐπὶ Καλχηδόνᾳ καὶ Βυζάντιον ὁρμήσαντες... 1.3.2. See also 2.2.1, where Lysander is said to have sailed to "Byzantium and Chalcedon" and then to have appointed Sthenelaus as harmost of "Byzantium and Chalcedon."

<sup>31</sup>With regard to the apparent contradiction between the oaths recorded at *Hellenica* 2.4.43 (which settled the Athenian civil war and allowed both factions to live thereafter in harmony) and the event recorded at 3.1.4 (that the Athenians chose as cavalry for Thibron those who served under the Thirty thinking that if they died it would be good for the democracy), John Dillery, *History of His Times*, 24, writes, "It may also be that Xenophon wishes to draw attention to the specific crime of *de facto* if not *de jure* oathbreaking, a topic in which he has a keen interest."

<sup>32</sup>See M. Amit, "Le traité de Chalcédoine entre Pharnabaze et les stratèges athéniens," *Class. Ant.* 42 (1973): 436-457, especially 450.





Athenians” the subject of the attack on Byzantium, in the end he indicates that Alcibiades was the main protagonist in the assault on Byzantium, for, in the report of the city’s fall through treachery, he writes [οἱ προδόται] εἰσήγαγον τὸ στράτευμα καὶ τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην (1.3.20).<sup>33</sup>

We should not underestimate the importance of this breach of faith, for oathbreaking was a very serious matter in Xenophon’s moral universe.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to Alcibiades, Pharnabazus made every effort to fulfill his oath to bring the Athenian ambassadors to the king even though he was aware of the Athenian perfidy at Byzantium (1.4.1), and though he came under great pressure from Cyrus not to do so (1.4.2-7).<sup>35</sup>

In his account of Alcibiades’ return to Athens, Xenophon shows him to be at the same time very careful and extremely careless. Although he desired to return to Athens, Alcibiades approached the city very cautiously and circuitously.<sup>36</sup> From Byzantium he sailed to Samos, and

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<sup>33</sup>See also 2.2.1 where Xenophon speaks of οἱ προδόντες Ἀλκιβιάδην τὸ Βυζάντιον.

<sup>34</sup>“Indeed, for Xenophon there was no greater act of impiety than the breaking of one’s oath.” Dillery, *History of His Times*, 184.

<sup>35</sup>It is perhaps noteworthy that the incident of the oathtaking between Pharnabazus and Alcibiades is a reversal of that between Tissaphernes and Agesilaus (3.4.6-11). There a Greek commander (Agesilaus) is faithful to his oaths in spite of his Persian counterpart (Tissaphernes) reneging on his oaths for the sake of military advantage. Here it is the Persian satrap who keeps his oath in the face of Greek unfaithfulness which is motivated by the desire for military advantage. For other examples of oathbreaking in the *Hellenica* and their significance see Frances Skoczylas Pownall, “Condemnation of the Impious in Xenophon’s *Hellenica*,” *HTR* 91 (1998): 251-277, especially 256-9.

<sup>36</sup>Speaking of Xenophon’s account, Donald Kagan, *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 288, writes, “He therefore approached the Piraeus cautiously and modestly, with only his small force of twenty triremes.”



from there to the Ceramic Gulf. He then returned to Samos (1.4.8-9) and from there on to Paros. He appears now to have been approaching Athens, but still he delayed, for he had some investigating to do first. He went to Gytheum, where the Spartans had their dockyard, to spy out the situation. But this trip also gave him opportunity for another sort of investigation, that of finding out how the Athenians back home were disposed toward him (1.4.11). It is only when he received triple assurance of their favour that he finally headed home (1.4.12). Once his ship was in port he still hesitated even though his arrival sparked the formation of a large, marvelling crowd, gathered from both the Piraeus and the city. He did not finally disembark until he spotted his friends from the deck of his ship (1.4.18-19). Yet in spite of his great caution in human affairs Alcibiades was wholly heedless of the divine, for he sailed into the Piraeus on the day of the celebration of the Plynteria. Xenophon highlights the impiety of this action by referring to the opinion of some that this was a bad omen, and by stating in his own words that this was a day on which no Athenian would dare to embark on any serious undertaking (1.4.12).<sup>37</sup> In his other works, Xenophon repeatedly extols the virtue of consulting the gods about things humanly unknowable--prominent among which is the future--and also strongly

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<sup>37</sup> Αθηναίων γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ οὐδενὸς σπουδαίου ἔργου τολμήσαι ἄν ᾔψασθαι. Bodil Due, "The Return of Alcibiades in Xenophon's *Hellenica* I.iv,8-23," *C&M* 42 (1992), 39-53, states that Xenophon's report of the return on Plynteria "adds a discrete criticism of Alcibiades' planning" (p. 42). Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 262, believes that this incident, together with the repeated reference to Alcibiades' earlier charge of the profanation of the Mysteries (1.4.14, 1.4.20), reveals Alcibiades to be impious.



advocates that men should be diligent to learn by human means that which is attainable by such.<sup>38</sup> Xenophon's portrayal of Alcibiades shows him exceedingly diligent in the latter, but wholly lacking with respect to the former. Alcibiades' impious entrance into Athens should be connected as well with his previous oathbreaking with Pharnabazus. Alcibiades, it appears, stood out from everyone else both in his skill and diligence in human endeavours, and in his hubris and lack of religious scruples.<sup>39</sup>

Alcibiades' return to Athens provoked extreme reactions among the people. Among the crowd which gathered to marvel at the sight of the famous Alcibiades at his return, some were willing to give him every benefit of the doubt, praising and defending him immoderately. They said that he was the best of citizens and alone was exiled unjustly; he had been accused by those of less ability who were acting for their own advantage, whereas he was always increasing the common good using his own and the city's resources; he wished to be judged immediately on the

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<sup>38</sup>*Mem.* 1.1.6-8, 4.3.12, 4.7.10; *Cyr.* 1.6.46.

<sup>39</sup>Blaise Nagy, "Alcibiades' Second 'Profanation'," *Hist* 43.3 (1994): 275-285, argues that the enemies of Alcibiades manipulated the date of the Plynteria to coincide with the arrival of Alcibiades in Athens, and then kept the change of date secret to ensure that their enemy enter the city on this inauspicious date. This thesis is highly speculative, but it does raise a significant problem: Alcibiades displayed great concern at this time to show himself very reverential toward the gods (as seen in his leading of the procession of the Mysteries to Eleusis, 1.4.20), yet he very irreverently entered the city on the Plynteria. The impression one gets from Xenophon's account, however, is that Alcibiades' arrival on the Plynteria was due to thoughtless insolence rather than ignorance, for he seems to contrast the care with which Alcibiades took into account human affairs with his heedlessness of divine concerns, and he clearly implies that the arrival evinced "daring" on the part of Alcibiades.





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charge of impiety, but his enemies unjustly deprived him of his homeland while he was absent; during his exile he had to help those who were most hateful to him because he was under constant threat of death, and had to watch helplessly as his dearest friends and relatives and indeed the whole city went astray; he was not the sort to want a revolution, for under the democracy he had higher honour than his contemporaries and no less than his elders; after his enemies had eliminated those who were better than they, the people naturally esteemed these enemies because they no longer had recourse to their betters (that is, Alcibiades) (1.4.13-16). This speech accentuates the superiority of Alcibiades over all others in ability and innocence and the extremity of this group's view of him.<sup>40</sup>

The opinion of others in the crowd went to the opposite extreme: Alcibiades alone (μόνος) was the cause of past evils and alone (μόνος) would be the source of their worst fears for the future (1.4.17). Xenophon's brief summary of this opinion again accentuates the singularity (now negative) of Alcibiades and the intemperance of the citizens' attitude toward him. Krentz believes that the brevity of expression here indicates that these charges "lack detail and therefore

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<sup>40</sup>Xenophon's wording is striking: Alcibiades is described as κράτιστος τῶν πολιτῶν, μόνος (13), τῶν τε ἡλικιωτῶν πλέον ἔχειν τῶν τε πρεσβυτέρων μὴ ἐλαττοῦσθαι (16); he is (by clear implication) βέλτιστος in comparison to his enemies (16) and they are οἱ ἐλαττον ἐκείνου δυνάμενοι (13); he was "always" (ἀεὶ) increasing the common good (13) and later was "always, every day" (ἀεὶ παρ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν) in danger of being killed (15); he wanted to be judged immediately (παρὰχρήμα) while the charge had just now (ἄρτι) been made (14); to support his superiority he was considered uniquely capable in the city (13,16), yet to show his innocence he was thought singularly powerless during his exile (15).



conviction.”<sup>41</sup> But surely the brevity is rather part of the contrast between the defenders and the detractors of Alcibiades: not only do they have opposite opinions but they hold them in very different ways, the former protesting too loudly with their excessive detail and the latter cynically resigned to expect the worst. The contrast shows that Alcibiades was a divisive force in the city. He did not personally build bridges with others nor did his presence encourage unity among the citizens generally. His effect on others was the opposite of that of Thrasybulus, who later brought the Athenians together in a long-standing harmony (2.4.43). The voice of the opposition also serves as an omen. “By mentioning the existence of an opposition Xenophon strikes a serious note in the apparently idyllic picture, preparing the reader for Alcibiades’ downfall after his triumph.”<sup>42</sup>

The negative opinion of Alcibiades, however, is seriously muted at this point, for apart from this very brief reference to an anti-Alcibiades faction, everything went his way. Not only was his defense before the council and the assembly accepted, but no one dared speak against him, for the assembly would not have allowed it. Not only was his position of general confirmed, but he was given the extraordinary authority of

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<sup>41</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 131.

<sup>42</sup>Due, “Return of Alcibiades,” 43.



ἀπάντων ἡγεμῶν αὐτοκράτωρ, <sup>43</sup> on the basis that he had the ability to restore the city to its former power. Not only did he have the honour of leading out the Mysteries to Eleusis, but he did so by land at a time when the procession always went by sea because of the war (1.4.20). The leading out of the Eleusinian procession is probably to be seen as an act of showmanship, rather than of true piety, on the part of Alcibiades. The procession was a good “photo-op”. In contrast, the Plynteria was a less conspicuous religious event and Alcibiades, in the absence of any proper religious sensibilities, had not been concerned either to exploit or avoid it.<sup>44</sup> Alcibiades had now reached the pinnacle of his political career: having had unprecedented military success, his abilities and accomplishments had received their just acknowledgement in the favour of the Demos and in the appointment to a military command of unequalled authority. The impression given by the narrative is that with Alcibiades in charge Athenian prospects were bright indeed.

Yet when Alcibiades actually went out from the city with a newly enlisted force, he fared much differently from expectation. He defeated the Andrians and the Spartans who were with them at Gaureum, but the victory was a limited one, for though he routed the enemy and set up a trophy, he killed few (οὐ πολλούς) and after a few days departed without

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<sup>43</sup> “This occasion is the first and only time the Athenians named a single general autocrat.” Krentz, *Xenophon, Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 132.

<sup>44</sup> See Nagy, “Alcibiades’ Second Profanation,” 277.





having taken the city (1.4.22-23). It was at Notium, however, that the real setback occurred, for here his skill failed him and his luck ran out. Before rushing north to help Thrasybulus at the siege of Phocaea, Alcibiades put his pilot, Antiochus, in charge of the fleet with strict instructions not to engage Lysander's ships. The appointment of a mere pilot over the fleet was unprecedented<sup>45</sup> and points up again that Alcibiades is not one to limit himself to conventional or generally accepted practices. It seems likely that Alcibiades' choice also represented a failure of collegiality as well, for he chose his personal pilot as commander instead of one of the other generals or one of the trierarchs. More important perhaps is that the choice of Antiochus was a poor one. First, he was untrustworthy, for as soon as Alcibiades had gone off to the Hellespont, Antiochus provoked battle by sailing brazenly, with his own ship and one other, into the harbour of Ephesus right before the prows of Lysander's ships. Second, he was incompetent, for his actions are inexplicable, suggesting either that he had a bad plan or no plan at all; moreover, whatever he might have been planning was poorly carried out, for the Athenians lost the resulting battle through

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<sup>45</sup>Kagan, *Fall of the Athenian Empire*, 314, believes that since there were no other generals available (a fact which Kagan does not convincingly establish), a pilot was as wise (or wiser) a choice as a trierarch for command of the fleet. He concedes, however, that "the conventional choice would have been a trierarch." The irregularity of the choice should not be underestimated. Kagan continues, "As far as we know, [this appointing of a pilot] was unique in the entire history of the Athenian navy... No other Athenian would have dared to make so unusual an appointment, but Alcibiades was a *strategos autokrator*."



disorder.<sup>46</sup> Alcibiades' good fortune also failed him at Notium. Up to this point his frenetic rushing from place to place had allowed him to show up just at the right time to save the day for the Athenians (1.1.5, 16, 1.3.6-7), but now he arrived after the battle was over. He did attempt to provoke Lysander to battle after he returned, but his efforts were in vain (1.5.15).

The Athenian defeat at Notium was not devastating: they lost only fifteen ships, and most of the crews managed to escape (1.5.14).<sup>47</sup> Yet the consequences for Alcibiades were serious indeed: the Athenians, angry at him for the loss at Notium and thinking that he had lost the ships through neglect and intemperance (δι' ἀμέλειαν τε καὶ ἀκράτειαν) stripped him of his generalship (1.5.16).<sup>48</sup> It is likely that Xenophon believed the opinion of the people was justified: Alcibiades' action was

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<sup>46</sup>In Andrewes' quite plausible reconstruction of the account of the Oxyrhynchus historian ("Notion and Kyzikos, 15-19), the impression of Antiochus' disobedience and incompetence is significantly less than in the *Hellenica*, for it provides Antiochus with a very limited and reasonable plan: the nine other ships with Antiochus constituted an ambush; Antiochus intended his own ship, going in alone, to draw out the three ships of Lysander's regular reconnaissance patrol to a place they could be ambushed by the waiting nine. It is perhaps significant that Xenophon's account in general fits well with such a reconstruction: Antiochus' initial brazenness (1.5.12) suggests a desire to provoke a response from Lysander; the "more [Athenian] ships" that came up to help Antiochus, correspond to the nine of the ambush in *P Oxy*; the rest of the Athenian fleet was launched in a disorganized fashion (1.5.13) because they were not expecting to take part in this minor action and only did so when they realized that the ambush had gone badly awry. With little effort, therefore, Xenophon could have shown Antiochus' action in a much more positive light, which in turn would have made Alcibiades' choice appear less culpable.

<sup>47</sup> "In material terms, the Athenian defeat at Notium was not very serious," Kagan, *Fall of the Athenian Empire*, 319.

<sup>48</sup>For the discussion as to whether Alcibiades was formally removed from office or simply not re-elected as general for 406 B. C., see Kagan, *ibid.*, 322, note 120.



neglectful in that he abandoned the main fleet and left an unqualified person in command; it was intemperate in that the choice was an extreme, unprecedented one; moreover, in the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon specifically identifies neglect and intemperance as the general cause of the personal decline of Alcibiades.<sup>49</sup> But surely Xenophon's narrative has a further point to make. The people of Athens became immediately angry at Alcibiades at his first relatively minor setback. Xenophon may be commenting here on the fickleness of the Athenians.<sup>50</sup> But it is just as likely that this is a commentary on the leadership of Alcibiades. As we have seen, he based his leadership on his own outstanding abilities and successes to the neglect of his colleagues and underlings. Moreover, the Athenians elected him general solely in expectation that he would be successful in returning the state to its former glory. Thus at his first indication of failure, he was cashiered, as we might have expected. In the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon persistently notes the importance for citizens to cultivate good friendships, not just for the personal, but also for the political, benefits (*Mem.* 1.2.52, 2.4.6, 2.6.24-29). This is something Alcibiades neglected to do. That this is an important element in

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<sup>49</sup>With respect to ἀμέλεια, in *Mem.* 1.2.24 Xenophon describes Alcibiades' corruption as οὕτω κάκεῖνος ἡμέλησεν αὐτοῦ. With respect to ἀκράτεια, throughout *Mem.* 1.2.12-24, Xenophon assumes that Alcibiades' problems were related to this vice: Alcibiades was ἀκρατέστατος (1.2.12); he (and Critias) showed self-control (the opposite of ἀκράτεια) when he was with Socrates, clearly implying that later he did not (1.2.18); and Xenophon (with Critias and Alcibiades in mind) shows by many arguments that it is entirely possible for a person who is σώφρων to lose his ability to control himself by lack of exercising the σωφροσύνης ἀρετῇ (1.2.19-23).

<sup>50</sup>Due, "Return of Alcibiades," 43.



Alcibiades' characterization in the *Hellenica* is also suggested by his last appearance. Before the battle of Aegospotami, Alcibiades came forward and pointed out that the Athenians were in a dangerous position and should shift their anchorage from Aegospotami to Sestus. His advice was clearly insightful for the problems he enumerated became those which led to the disastrous Athenian defeat (2.1.27-28). Yet the generals did not heed Alcibiades' good counsel. They told him to go away, for *they* were in command now and not *he* (2.1.26).<sup>51</sup> The emphatic nature of the response suggests that these present generals resented the past authority of Alcibiades. Of the two generals mentioned as especially scornful of Alcibiades, we know from 1.2.16 that one, Menander, had served under Alcibiades. If Alcibiades had cultivated more friendly relations with others during the time of his ascendancy, he might have been able to save the day now for the Athenians. And this is the main point of Xenophon's account of Alcibiades: in spite of his tremendous abilities he was not able to bring hegemony to Athens; his extreme self-centredness and his exclusive self-reliance undermined his potential to restore Athens to its former pre-eminence.

Thucydides, in his well-known description of Alcibiades (6.15.4), says that publicly (δημοσίᾳ) Alcibiades' conduct of the war was excellent, but the Athenians were vexed by his behaviour in private (ιδίᾳ), so that

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<sup>51</sup>οἱ δὲ στρατηγοί, μάλιστα δὲ Τυδεὺς καὶ Μένανδρος, ἀπιέναι αὐτὸν ἐκέλευσαν· αὐτοὶ γὰρ νῦν στρατηγεῖν, οὐκ ἐκείνων.





turning to others for leadership before long they ruined the city. Due holds that Xenophon is very aware of this description of Alcibiades and that Xenophon's description of Alcibiades "gives meaning to the words of Thucydides."<sup>52</sup> This opinion has some merit, for Xenophon's description of Alcibiades' conduct of the war (as we have seen) places great emphasis on its excellence and the reference at *Hell.* 1.5.16 to ἀμέλεια τε καὶ ἀκράτεια suggests the Athenians were concerned with Alcibiades' personal characteristics. Furthermore, those to whom the Athenians turned for generalship certainly ruined the city by their foolishness at Aegospotami. Yet Xenophon's portrayal of Alcibiades is inconsistent with Thucydides' description of him in one significant way. It is not his way of life privately that caused the Athenians to turn to others but his ἀμέλεια τε καὶ ἀκράτεια displayed publicly as general. In fact nowhere in the *Hellenica* do we find Xenophon interested in Alcibiades' private vices or virtues, though he discusses certain aspects of them at *Mem.* 1.2.12-25 and though they were widely notorious.<sup>53</sup> Everything reported about Alcibiades involves his military and political activities. Xenophon's portrayal of Alcibiades, therefore, explores, above all else, the wider political implications of his life and activities.

The fortunes of the city of Athens seem to depend to a very great

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<sup>52</sup> "Return of Alcibiades," 47-48.

<sup>53</sup> See Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 165-6.



degree on the fortunes of Alcibiades. Alcibiades' life, as portrayed by Xenophon, is the story of a spectacular reversal. He rises swiftly and inexorably from an exile to a leader with unparalleled political power. The fortunes of Athens also rise as swiftly as, and entirely because of, Alcibiades' rise. The fall of the city too is associated with the fall of her brightest son, for by the rejection of the fallen Alcibiades' advice, the fleet was destroyed at Aegospotami. In Xenophon's narrative, therefore, the fate of the city is embodied in that of its leading figure. But does the example of Alcibiades and Athens simply indicate that a city's fortune depends very largely on the quality of its leaders and that Athens failed because of the failures of Alcibiades? Perhaps more is involved in Xenophon's thinking. In *Mem.* 1.2.12-25 Xenophon explores the decline of Alcibiades. He says that when Alcibiades associated with Socrates, he exercised self-control, but when he judged he had received from Socrates everything he needed to gain pre-eminence in the state, he abandoned his association with Socrates as well as his exercise of self-control (1.2.14-21).<sup>54</sup> He was pursued by noble women because of his physical beauty, flattered by powerful men because of his influence in the city, and honoured by the Demos with a pre-eminent position. Because of these things, and with the addition of the heady effect of noble birth, wealth and natural ability, he became arrogant, neglected himself and fell into evil (1.2.24-25). Xenophon's later description of the decline of

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<sup>54</sup>A large part, but not all, of this discussion also includes Critias with Alcibiades.



Athens (3.5.13; now not in his own words but those of Socrates) is strikingly similar to his description of the deterioration of Alcibiades: Athens has waned because like certain others who gained clear ascendancy then lost it through carelessness, the Athenians, being far superior to others, have neglected themselves and have thus deteriorated. Xenophon even applies the same comparison of a complacent athlete to both Alcibiades (1.2.24) and Athens. The city of Athens provides a fairly obvious parallel to Alcibiades' lawlessness and impiety in the events surrounding the trial of the Arginusae generals in which she unjustly and illegally condemned the victorious generals and acted impiously in not attributing the cause of the failed pickup to the gods (see especially 1.7.19, 25, 33). Thus it is likely that Xenophon understood that the most prominent citizen of Athens embodied the character of the city as a whole and thus they fell together.<sup>55</sup>

The great difficulty of evaluating the presentation of Alcibiades in the *Hellenica* is that Xenophon makes no explicit assessment of him or his actions in the text itself. Rather he forces us to discern Alcibiades' significance mainly from the description of his actions and by a clever use of contrast with other characters--with Thrasyllus to show how great was his military prowess and with Hermocrates and Pharnabazus to point up his lawlessness and impiety. Xenophon does not intend

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<sup>55</sup>If Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 193-5, is correct in her interpretation of the character of Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, then Plato similarly linked the character and fortunes of Alcibiades with those of the city of Athens.





Alcibiades solely as a moral lesson but also as a political one. He is a leader with singular potential to lead Athens to victory over the Spartans and to the restoration of her former power and glory. But he squanders this potential by setting himself above everyone else and above the laws and religious requirements. He puts himself in the precarious position of relying solely on his own outstanding abilities, neglecting to depend on the support of other people and to consider the gods. As a result, as soon as his wisdom and luck fail him, he falls from favour and from power. The experience of Athens' most gifted son is also the experience of the city itself, for she too falls soon after Alcibiades. Alcibiades, then, provides part of the answer as to why no state in Greece was able to exercise a stable hegemony over Greece: in spite of his extraordinary potential, his irregularities of character kept him from leading his city to preeminence.

### **Theramenes**

While Xenophon presents Alcibiades as both a military and political figure, he portrays Theramenes as an almost exclusively political figure. In Xenophon's scheme of things Theramenes the politician represents what is wrong with the political processes in Athens around the time of her defeat in the war against Sparta. He is clever and devious and his actions are consistently characterized by self-protection and -advancement and a complete disregard for legality and justice. Theramenes, by his manipulation of the Demos, brings about the unjust



condemnation of the victorious Arginusae generals in order to protect himself. After Aegospotami, he arranges things such that his voice becomes decisive in the city's settlement with Sparta, though this comes at a great cost to the city. Afterwards he is a leading figure in the regime of the Thirty whose rule is an illegal, unconstitutional tyranny. At this time he again attempts to manipulate the situation so that he comes out on top, but his machinations are finally thwarted by the equally tyrannical but more direct and ruthless Critias. Xenophon, as in his portrayal of Alcibiades, brings out aspects of Theramenes' character by comparison and contrast with others. He contrasts Theramenes' self-interest with the generosity of the generals who helped the city not only by winning the sea-battle abroad, but also by working for unity within the city in refusing to bring charges against those who failed to rescue the shipwrecked. Xenophon also brings out the lawlessness of Theramenes by contrasting it with the justice of Socrates (in his action) and Eurypotemus (in his speech). The most interesting and detailed comparison is that with Critias. Xenophon shows both Critias and Theramenes to be tyrants who are striving against each other for primacy in the oligarchy, but who have opposite approaches, Critias blunt and violent and Theramenes clever and deceptive. Theramenes ultimately fails to win this contest, but most important to Xenophon's purpose is that Theramenes, by his corruption, undermines the political stability of his city.

Until after the battle of Arginusae, Theramenes remains an



incidental character in Xenophon's narrative. He sailed into Sestus to join Alcibiades, who was about to sail against Mindarus at Cyzicus (1.1.12). He must have participated in the battle, but is not specifically mentioned in Xenophon's record. He, together with Eumenes, was left in Chrysopolis to collect the ten percent levy and to do any other damage to the enemy that he could (1.1.22). Xenophon does not mention him at all in his account of the battle of Arginusae, until after the battle was over. Diodorus, on the other hand, gives Theramenes a much more prominent role in the events of the same period. He records Theramenes' command of a fleet that went out to Euboea and then Ionia in 410 (13.47.6-8) and later the same year to Pydna and Thrace (13.49.1-2). Theramenes was very prominent in the battle of Cyzicus, according to Diodorus (13.50.1,3,7; 51.2-5). In 409 he besieged Chalcedon and Byzantium (13.64.3; 66.1-4). At Arginusae, he received a special command from Pericles, son of Pericles (13.98.3). Why, then, does Xenophon downplay the military role of Theramenes during this period? I suggest he does so because he wants to portray Theramenes as important solely for his role in the internal politics of Athens. And the role he gives to Theramenes is a consistently negative one: Theramenes was a very skilful but devious, self-serving political manipulator who was largely responsible for the turmoil of Athens in the period which followed the battle of Arginusae until his death during the reign of the Thirty.

Xenophon constructs his account of the battle of Arginusae with



the trial of the generals in mind.<sup>56</sup> He does this first by portraying the generals in a very positive light, thus making Theramenes' later attack against them appear that much more sinister. Xenophon accentuates the greatness of the generals' victory by focussing on the desperation of the Athenians before the battle: they voted for the outfitting of 110 ships--an extraordinary number;<sup>57</sup> they enlisted all those who were of military age, both slave and free; the ships were manned and ready in an amazingly short thirty days;<sup>58</sup> even a good number of cavalrymen joined in the expedition (presumably as sailors; 1.6.24); to augment the fleet they gathered all the allied ships they could find (compelling the crews to board) and whatever Athenian ships that happened to be abroad (1.6.25); when the generals arranged the fleet for battle, they took into account that their seamanship was inferior to that of their Spartan opponents (1.6.31).<sup>59</sup> In his record of the pre-battle dispositions of the Athenians Xenophon provides a level of detail "unparalleled in [his] other naval

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<sup>56</sup>"Xenophon's battle narrative relates directly to his version of the 'trial' in 7.1-35." Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 151.

<sup>57</sup>Both Diodorus (13.97.1) and Plato (*Menex.* 243c) state that the number of ships outfitted was sixty, a more credible total.

<sup>58</sup>Such a short time seems not very plausible. Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 51, states, "The Athenians would have needed more than the thirty days of this passage to build even sixty new triremes."

<sup>59</sup>χείρον γὰρ ἔπλεον. Presumably because their crews--a hastily recruited jumble of everything from slaves to cavalrymen--lacked the skills and experience of their opponents. Xenophon goes on to say that the Lacedaemonians arranged themselves in a single line in preparation for the execution of the δῖε κπλους and the περίπλους, διὰ τὸ βέλτιον πλεῖν.





battles.”<sup>60</sup> This level of detail stands out especially in comparison to the brevity of the report of the formation of the Lacedaemonians and of the battle itself (13, 3 and 6 OCT lines respectively). Xenophon includes a description of the position of every one of the eight generals eventually convicted in the later trial, no doubt to highlight the role that each played in the battle.

The Athenians won the battle of Arginusae, but lost twenty-five ships in the process (1.6.34). The generals decided to leave Theramenes and Thrasybulus with forty-seven ships to recover the lost ships and the men in them, while they themselves with the rest of the fleet sailed against Eteonicus at Mytilene (1.6.35). A storm with high winds, however, prevented the Athenians from doing as they planned. In Diodorus, the Athenians are divided about picking up the shipwrecked,<sup>61</sup> but Xenophon gives no hint (at least at this point) of any indecision. He emphasizes both the desire to go after the lost and the severity of the storm which thwarted them: ταῦτα δὲ βουλομένους ποιεῖν ἄνεμος καὶ χειμῶν διεκώλυσεν αὐτοὺς μέγας γενόμενος (1.6.35). Xenophon, therefore, makes it clear that no one was at fault for the failed rescue. The report of the battle supports the opinion, expressed a number of times at the trial,

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<sup>60</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 153.

<sup>61</sup>Diodorus reports that some of the generals wanted to pick up the dead and others to sail to Mytilene. The soldiers spoke against the recovery of the dead because of the hardships they suffered during the battle and because of the size of the waves. In the end, their controversy proved moot, for the growing storm forced them to put in again at Arginusae (13.100.1-3).



that accusations of any sort were unnecessary. This in turn points up the ruthlessness of Theramenes who could have protected himself quite sufficiently by claiming that the storm and the storm alone was to blame, without resorting to a condemnation of the generals.

Xenophon continues to portray the generals in a consistently positive light when they (or at least most of them) returned from the field. After reporting that those at home relieved all the generals except Conon of their commission, he again lists the names of each of the eight generals, of whom six returned home (Pericles, Diomedon, Lysias, Aristocrates, Thrasyllus and Erasinides) and two (Protomachus and Aristogenes) did not (1.7.2). He names them again most likely as a way of honouring the memory of these generals, just as he consistently names their opponents and accusers so as to allow their names to live on in infamy.<sup>62</sup>

Back home, the Athenians relieved the generals of their command with no reason provided in the narrative, thereby giving the impression that there was a vague or perhaps multi-faceted dissatisfaction with

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<sup>62</sup>Mabel Lang, "Theramenes and Arginousai," *Hermes* 120 (1992): 267-79, observes that there is an emphasis on individuals in this passage. She believes that this emphasis arises out of a revisionist version of this episode (which Xenophon adopts), which exculpated the Demos by focussing on (and blaming) individuals who were responsible for leading the Demos astray (p. 275). Her observation about individuals is correct, it seems to me, but it does not support her main thesis, which stumbles on the fact that Xenophon takes care to name individually not only those whom he blames (the generals' attackers) but also those whom he admires (the generals).



them.<sup>63</sup> The attack on them was somewhat random and piecemeal, for before they were arraigned as a group, Erasinides was brought to court by the demagogue Archedemus and fined for embezzling state funds, then indicted (and imprisoned) on some sort of charge related to his generalship (1.7.2). It was after this that the generals gave a report to the Council “about the naval battle and the greatness of the storm.” Timocrates proposed that these generals as well should be imprisoned to be handed over to the Demos, and the Council agreed (1.7.3). Theramenes took the most conspicuous role in the Assembly at which the generals were judged, for, Xenophon tells us, “others but especially Theramenes” were accusing the generals, saying that they should give an account as to why they did not pick up the shipwrecked. The reason for the accusation is significant: “For as evidence that they blamed no one else, he (Theramenes) displayed a letter which the generals sent to the Council and the people, blaming nothing other than the storm” (1.7.4).<sup>64</sup> Theramenes’ argument by itself does not entirely make sense. If the storm was to blame why should any persons be blamed? Theramenes, it appears, judged the mood of the Demos and believed it would not be satisfied until someone was punished. He also realized that there was a

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<sup>63</sup>Diodorus states very clearly that the Athenians back home, upon hearing the results of the battle, commended the generals for their success, but were angry because they neglected to pick up those who had died on behalf of Athenian supremacy (13.101.1).

<sup>64</sup>ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οὐδενὸς ἄλλου καθήπτοντο, ἐπιστολὴν ἐπεδείκνυε μαρτύριον ἦν ἔπεμψαν οἱ στρατηγοὶ εἰς τὴν βουλὴν καὶ εἰς τὸν δῆμον, ἄλλο οὐδὲν αἰτιώμενοι ἢ τὸν χειμῶνα.





widespread feeling of animosity toward the generals. By wording the basis of the accusation in this way, Xenophon makes it clear that in accusing the generals Theramenes wanted to protect himself, for if the generals did not take the fall, then he (with Thrasybulus) was the only other obvious target of blame. So Theramenes opportunistically scapegoated the generals to protect himself.

In their defence the generals, in contrast to Theramenes, took the high road. They pointed out that if it was necessary to blame someone, those to whom the pickup had been assigned should be blamed, for they were capable and experienced. But even though those who were responsible for the pickup were accusing them, they would not lie by reciprocating with an accusation; the severity of the storm alone was to blame. They then produced, as witnesses to corroborate what they were saying, pilots and many others who were on the expedition. The people found the generals' defence a convincing one (1.7.6), and many of the citizens stood up to offer bail for them (1.7.7). In sum, the generals were manifestly innocent of the charges: the historical account of the event itself supported them, their letter to the council and people was consistent with their testimony at the trial, and they had witnesses to confirm their story. And not only were they innocent, they were virtuous as well, for when dealt with illegally and accused wrongly they did not retaliate in kind but rather spoke honestly and forthrightly.

Darkness, however, induced the people to put off the vote until another Assembly. The Council was directed to bring forward a proposal



for the manner in which the generals should be judged (1.7.7). Before the next Assembly could be held, the Apaturia, a family festival, intervened. Theramenes, we now discover, did not work alone but had a group of adherents (οἱ περὶ τὸν Θηραμένην) who helped him with his schemes. The Theramenes faction worked for the destruction of the generals in two ways. First, they organized people to dress up as mourners, pretending to be relatives of those lost at Arginusae, and attend the Apaturia. Here Theramenes acted with the same impious disregard for a holy day as Alcibiades did on the Plynteria.<sup>65</sup> Second, they induced Callixenus, a member of the Council, to attack the generals in the Council (1.7.8). When the day of the Assembly arrived, Callixenus brought forward the Council's decision, whose wording and arrangement were clearly biased against the generals. The herald was to declare that whoever thought the generals had done wrong in not picking up those who were victorious in the sea battle should vote in the more prominent (προτέρα) urn, and whoever thought they had not done wrong in not picking up those who were victorious in the sea battle should vote in the less prominent (ὕστερα) jar (1.7.9-10).<sup>66</sup> To add to the injustice of the proceedings, though Callixenus declared that there would be no more

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<sup>65</sup>See above, p.52-3. For the impiety involved here see Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 263-4.

<sup>66</sup>Xenophon writes, ὅτω δοκοῦσιν ἀδικεῖν οἱ στρατηγοὶ οὐκ ἀνελόμενοι τοὺς νικήσαντας ἐν τῇ ναυμαχίᾳ εἰς τὴν προτέραν ψηφίσασθε, ὅτω δὲ μή, εἰς τὴν ὕστεραν.



time given for defence and prosecution, a man who claimed to be one of the survivors of the shipwreck announced that those perishing had enjoined him, if he should survive, to declare to the Demos that the generals did not rescue those who had acted so bravely on behalf of the fatherland (1.7.11). Though not explicitly stated, there is little doubt that we are to understand this travesty also to have been orchestrated by Theramenes and his faction.

Callixenus, however, did not go unchallenged. Euryptolemus and a few others charged him with making illegal proposals, and a minority of the Demos supported them. But the mass shouted that it would be a terrible thing if the Demos was not allowed to do what it wished (1.7.13). The crowd, now with one Lyciscus as spokesman, shouted out that unless they allowed the proposal of Callixenus to stand, those opposing the will of the Demos should be tried along with the generals (1.7.14). The dual emphasis on the illegality and the willfulness of the Demos, which continues to be a (if not *the*) major theme in this section, is very suggestive. In *Mem.* 4.6.12 Xenophon attributes to Socrates the opinion that kingship and tyranny differ in that the former is government over willing subjects according to the laws of the state, while the latter is government over unwilling subjects not according to the laws but as the ruler wishes (ὅπως ὁ ἄρχων βούλοιτο).<sup>67</sup> In the trial of the generals the

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<sup>67</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 149, draws the connection between this *Memorabilia* passage and Xenophon's treatment of the rule of the Thirty. He writes, "Time and again Xenophon will draw notice to this solitary motivation of the tyrants."



Demos, then, functions as a tyranny, forcing its illegal will on those who oppose and on the state as a whole.<sup>68</sup> The effect is heightened by the atmosphere of compulsion and fear that accompanies this illegality and willfulness. The crowd compelled its opponents to allow the proposals of the Council to stand (1.7.13). When some of the prytanes said they would not put forward an illegal vote, Callixenus charged them with “the same things” and the crowds shouted that they should be indicted (1.7.14). The prytanes capitulated in fear, except for Socrates, who said he would do nothing except what was legal (1.7.15).

After this, Euryptolemus got up in the Assembly to speak on behalf of the generals. His speech is quite lengthy, taking up just over half of the space allotted to the trial.<sup>69</sup> It is clearly of great importance to the overall intent of the author in this section of the *Hellenica*. Different suggestions have been put forward as to the significance of the speech. Due posits that by this speech Xenophon shows to what depths a politician had to descend to get justice in Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian war. Euryptolemus was clever and his cause was just but he stooped to flattery, manipulation and compromise, for this was what

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<sup>68</sup>Critias' comments in 2.3.16 show that a tyrannical approach to government need not be restricted to a government headed by one person. He says to Theramenes, “If you think that, because we are thirty and not one, we can be any less concerned to exercise this rule like a tyrant, you are a simpleton.” In this statement we should probably see a reflection of Xenophon's own thoughts on tyranny. If it is possible for thirty together to act tyrannically, why not the Demos as a whole?

<sup>69</sup>The trial apart from this speech takes up 89 lines in the OCT; the speech takes up 93 lines.





was required given the grim state of Athens at this time.<sup>70</sup> But surely Euryptolemus' accommodation to the crowd was simply prudent. Gray believes only one explanation can account for all the elements of the speech: "Xenophon offers the speech as a memorial to the good qualities of Euryptolemus."<sup>71</sup> But surely this is too simplistic an approach and fails to appreciate how thoroughly the speech fits with its context, as we shall see. Mabel Lang has a more positive view of Euryptolemus' speech. According to her, the opinions and attitudes expressed in this speech represent "the true nature of the Demos unbeguiled." The very size of the speech dwarfs the narrative, which is dominated by the unreasonableness and illegality of the Demos, and is a contrast to it, giving the impression that the true nature of the Demos loves that which is lawful and that its true voice speaks with reason.<sup>72</sup> I believe Lang is right in viewing the essence of the speech positively, but the extreme fickleness of the Demos in Xenophon's portrayal surely precludes that his narrative reflects a revisionist approach which upholds the essential goodness of the Demos. The most helpful approach to this problem is the suggestion made by Pownall. She believes that there is a close, complementary relationship between the narrative that leads up to the

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<sup>70</sup>Bodil Due, "The Trial of the Generals in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," *C&M* 34 (1983): 33-44, especially 38-41.

<sup>71</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 86.

<sup>72</sup>Lang, "Theramenes and Arginousai," 276.



speech and the speech itself. Both, for example, put a great stress on legality. Also important is the relationship between Socrates' action immediately before the speech and the speech itself: "perhaps Xenophon intends Socrates to represent virtue in action and Euryptolemus virtue in speech."<sup>73</sup>

I will build on this approach. We have already seen that the crowd at the trial is characterized as willful and lawless; these two characteristics are prominent topics in Euryptolemus' speech as well (1.7.16-33). The concern with legality and justice is ubiquitous: Euryptolemus advised the Assembly to afford the generals a full day for defending themselves (19), which was no doubt meant to make up for the too brief defence (which was dubbed οὐ κατὰ τὸν νόμον) allowed earlier (1.7.5); he advocated using a clearly defined (and severe) law in the judgement of the generals, either the decree of Cannonus or the law governing temple-robbers and traitors (20-24); he urged them to judge the men κατὰ τὸν νόμον and not to destroy them unjudged, παρὰ τὸν νόμον (25); he wondered aloud if they, his audience, feared that they would not be able to do as they wished if they acted κατὰ τὸν νόμον but would be able if they act παρὰ τὸν νόμον (26); he reminded them that it would be a terrible thing if they accorded to Aristarchus, the traitor and subverter of the Demos, a full day to defend himself and all the other rights that were

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<sup>73</sup>Frances Skoczylas Pownall, "Shifting Viewpoints in Xenophon's *Hellenica*: The Arginusae Episode," *Athenaeum* 88 (2000): 499-513, especially 507.



his κατὰ τὸν νόμον, but did not do the same for these heroes of the sea battle (28); he admonished them not to attempt anything apart from the laws, which were their very own, by which they had become great (29); he declared that it was only just that the generals be required to give an account of the naval actions for which alone they were responsible and that those charged with picking up the shipwrecked be held responsible for its non-accomplishment (31); he concluded with the declaration that it would be more just to give the generals garlands than punishment (33). Euryptolemus was also very conscious of the willfulness of the Demos: he stated that if they gave the generals plenty of time to defend themselves they would truly know who was guilty and could then punish them in whatever way they wished (ἢ ἂν βούλησθε δίκη) and would be in a position where they entrusted their judgement to no one else but themselves (19); if they decided to use the decree of Cannonus he urged them to judge Pericles first if it seemed good to them (ἂν ὑμῖν γε δοκῇ, 20);<sup>74</sup> they should employ the law for temple-robbers and traitors if they wished (εἰ βούλεσθε, 22); they should use which of the two legal precedents they wanted (τούτων ὁποτέρῳ βούλεσθε, 23); Euryptolemus made the point that if they followed his advice, wrongdoers would receive the severest punishment and the innocent would be set free “by you” (24); Euryptolemus wondered aloud if they feared that if they acted κατὰ

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<sup>74</sup>Note the γε which gives emphasis to the ὑμῖν.





τὸν νόμον they would not be able to do as they wished (ὃν ἂν βούλησθε, 26). Significant perhaps too is the description of the generals as “those who did everything according to your will” (τοὺς πάντα ὑμῖν κατὰ γνώμην πράξαντας, 28). The overall implication of the speech then is that the Demos is in danger of acting unjustly and illegally (and therefore tyrannically) because of its willfulness.<sup>75</sup> Euryptolemus declared that they were certainly free to do whatever they wanted, but only within the limits of the law.

The presence and activity of Socrates is also important for an understanding of Euryptolemus’ speech. Socrates appeared just at the point when everyone else had been cowed into submission by the mob. The opponents of the decree of the Council had become silent for fear of being judged together with the generals (1.7.13). The minority of prytanes who said they would not put forward an illegal proposal had been stifled in the same way by Callixenus and the mob (1.7.14-15). The only one left with will undaunted was Socrates. Immediately after Socrates’ declaration that he would do nothing contrary to the laws, Euryptolemus stepped forward and gave his speech extolling legality. Henry suggests that this scenario is “simply impossible,” since Euryptolemus and the others had just recently retreated before the

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<sup>75</sup>For Xenophon’s reflections on legality and justice, see *Mem.* 4.4.12-19 where Socrates refuses to support the sophistic distinction between what is lawful and what is just.



threats of the crowd.<sup>76</sup> But perhaps that is the point: Socrates' action inspired and emboldened Euryptolemus to take a public stand for justice and the good of the city.<sup>77</sup> This is precisely the relationship between Socrates and political activity that we notice elsewhere in Xenophon's writings. At *Mem.* 3.7, Socrates observed that Charmides was a very capable and powerful speaker who gave excellent advice privately, yet shrank from speaking in the Assembly. Socrates encouraged him not to fear the reaction of the crowds but to speak up for the good of himself, his friends and the state.<sup>78</sup> So Euryptolemus' speech is Socrates' contribution to the political well-being of the state and should be read as a such. It is also, therefore, a fair and reliable expression of Xenophon's sentiment.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, 198.

<sup>77</sup>Henry, *ibid.*, imagines that the speech of Euryptolemus constitutes an artistic flaw in Xenophon's narrative. He believes that Xenophon dramatically builds up to the refusal of Socrates so as to make it the centrepiece of the story but then diminishes the effect by not sufficiently setting Socrates' action off from Euryptolemus' speech. I agree that Xenophon dramatically builds to the refusal of Socrates, but to say that the merging of Socrates' action with the following speech of Euryptolemus constitutes an artistic flaw is highly debatable. Henry's basic observations support my point that the speech is to be seen in the light of Socrates' action.

<sup>78</sup>See also Socrates' discussion with Antiphon in *Mem.* 1.6.15.

<sup>79</sup>We should also note that a number of statements in the speech accord perfectly with Xenophon's direct narrative. Euryptolemus' account of the reason the shipwrecked were not picked up (the severity of the storm, 1.7.32) is the same as the narrative and the report of the generals (1.6.35, 1.7.6). Also his prognostication that the Athenians would soon regret the condemnation of the generals (1.7.19) came true very specifically (1.7.35). Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 263, writes "At the conclusion of this episode it becomes clear that Xenophon's own opinion coincides with that of Socrates and Euryptolemus."



How then does this speech add to Xenophon's portrayal of Theramenes? Euryptolemus, in agreement with the narrative, held Theramenes responsible for the impending miscarriage of justice. He mentioned him by name twice. At 1.7.17-18, he reported that the generals decided not to send a letter to the Council stating that Theramenes and Thrasybulus were charged with picking up the shipwrecked, but failed to do so. In response to this act of φιλανθρωπία they (Theramenes and Thrasybulus) with some others were plotting the generals' destruction. It is clear, however, that Euryptolemus considered Theramenes rather than Thrasybulus or any of the others the mainstay of the plot, for at 1.7.31 he spoke of "Thrasybulus and Theramenes, who [singular, referring to Theramenes alone] in the former Assembly was accusing the generals."<sup>80</sup> The emphasis seems to be on the injustice and lack of χάρις on Theramenes' part: he condemned others for something for which he rightfully should have had to give an account;<sup>81</sup> in return for the φιλανθρωπία accorded him, he plotted against his benefactors.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Euryptolemus (like Xenophon in the narrative and the

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<sup>80</sup>Θρασύβουλος καὶ Θηραμένης, ὃς ἐν τῇ προτέρᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ κατηγορεῖ τῶν στρατηγῶν.

<sup>81</sup>Euryptolemus followed up the reference to Theramenes at 1.7.31 by saying that the generals should be required to give an account of the things that did not go well militarily and that those who had been assigned the task of the rescue should be required to give an account of why it did not occur.

<sup>82</sup>The reference to plotting (ἐπιβουλεύειν) clarifies the moral position of Theramenes in his activities against the generals. Euryptolemus' interpretation of Theramenes' actions leaves no room to doubt his evil intent.



generals in their defense before the Assembly) absolved not only the generals but also Theramenes for the lack of recovery of the shipwrecked (1.7.32-33). This makes emphatic the villainy of Theramenes, for it shows how unnecessary it was to attack the generals and how badly he reciprocated the kindness of the generals. It is likely that other negative references in the speech are also meant to apply to Theramenes. When Euryptolemus spoke of those who would deceive the Assembly (1.7.19), Theramenes must be in mind, especially in light of the events at the Apaturia. When he spoke of his audience being persuaded by evil men (1.7.33), surely the reference applied primarily to the main prosecutor of the generals.<sup>83</sup> In sum, Theramenes used his impressive political skills to deviously manipulate the tyrannical and unjust propensities of the masses in order to condemn the generals and thereby protect himself. He will play a very similar role later in the rule of the Thirty.

Euryptolemus' speech was ultimately ineffectual. The generals were condemned and the six present executed. This is not where Xenophon wants the story to end, however. True to Euryptolemus' prediction, the Athenians soon regretted their action and they indicted "whoever deceived the Demos." Callixenus and four others were included

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<sup>83</sup>Lang, "Theramenes and Arginusai," 269, 277, believes that Theramenes' role in the whole affair was actually different from that of the demagogues who were subverting the laws for their own ends, since he was (she speculates) the officially elected prosecutor in the case. If this was true, however, it certainly did not moderate Xenophon's presentation of Theramenes.





in this group, but Theramenes evidently escaped prosecution.<sup>84</sup> The five escaped, however, before they were brought to trial. Callixenus, the most infamous of the five, eventually returned to Athens but died in a famine, hated by everyone. His evil and impiety were punished and the story has come full circle.<sup>85</sup> But the attentive reader will remember that Callixenus was not the main villain in the story. He was merely a tool of Theramenes and his associates. To truly complete the cycle of retribution would require the destruction of Theramenes. Yet Theramenes escaped punishment. Perhaps Aristophanes sheds light on the situation. At a time when the trial of the generals would have been still fresh in the Athenians' mind, Aristophanes presents Theramenes as a very shrewd fellow who involved himself in questionable affairs but then cleverly managed to extricate himself unscathed.

Theramenes? A shrewd man indeed, and altogether clever  
Who, if he somehow falls in with evil and ends up nearby,  
Lands outside the troubles...<sup>86</sup>

For this to have had a point, Theramenes must have had a widespread reputation in the city as a slippery fellow. To return to the *Hellenica*, it

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<sup>84</sup>The four others prosecuted were likely Archedemus, Timocrates, Lyciscus and Meneclis. See Lang, "Theramenes and Arginusai," 277.

<sup>85</sup>See Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 263-4.

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Θεραμένης: σοφὸς γ' ἄνθρωπος καὶ δεινὸς εἰς τὰ πάντα,  
ὅς ἦν κακοῖς που περιπέσῃ καὶ πλησίον παραστῇ,  
πέπτωκεν ἔξω τῶν κακῶν  
*Frogs*, 967-70



may be that in the emphasis on Callixenus' punishment and the glaring avoidance of any mention of Theramenes at this point, Xenophon by his silence speaks.<sup>87</sup>

The next time Theramenes appears in the narrative, at the negotiations between Sparta and Athens in the aftermath of Aegospotami (2.2.16-23), he is again portrayed as an opportunistic political schemer. Just as he exploited for his own purposes the negative feelings of the Demos toward the generals and the family sentiments associated with the Apaturia, so now he exploits Athenian fear and despair which resulted from their overwhelming loss in the sea battle.

After hearing the results of Aegospotami, the Athenians mourned not only those who perished as a result of the battle, but also themselves, fearing that they would suffer the same things that they had inflicted on those they had conquered in the past (2.2.3). Soon they found themselves besieged by land and sea, without ships, allies or food, and at a complete loss as to what to do. They figured that there was no way to escape retribution for all the injustice they had done to others (2.2.10). When their food had completely run out, they sent an embassy to Agis at Decelea, which then went on to Sparta, asking for terms of peace. This embassy was dismissed out of hand before even reaching Sparta when the Lacedaemonians discovered that Athens would not consider the destruction of her walls (2.2.11-13). When the ambassadors

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<sup>87</sup>Pace Pownall "Shifting Viewpoints," 509, who sees the scapegoating of Callixenus in the narrative as an "apparent softening of Xenophon's attitude towards Theramenes."



arrived home, despair fell upon everyone. They thought they would be sold as slaves and that in the time it took to renegotiate, many would die of hunger (2.2.14). With these fears playing off one another, no one dared counsel the destruction of the walls according to the terms for peace offered by the Spartans because when Archestratus did so in the Council he was imprisoned. The Assembly even passed a decree banning discussion concerning the destruction of the walls (2.2.15). In this section, Xenophon highlights both the strength of the dread and despair of the Athenians and the impasse caused by the conflicting fears of punishment and starvation.

Into this situation Theramenes intruded by volunteering to bring a solution to the quandary (2.2.16). Since he did, in the end, bring about a resolution to the impasse without the destruction or enslavement of the city, it may be that Xenophon considers Theramenes' part a positive one. But his account is full of indications that this is not the case. "In the Assembly Theramenes said that if they wished they should send him to Lysander. When he found out whether the Lacedaemonians were insistent about the walls because they wanted to enslave the city or as a pledge of good faith, he would return."<sup>88</sup> The nuances of Theramenes' statement are important. First, he broached the idea, which seems not to have occurred to the Athenians up to this point, that the Spartans

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<sup>88</sup>Θεράμενης εἶπεν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ὅτι εἰ βούλονται αὐτὸν πέμψαι παρὰ Λύσανδρον, εἰδὼς ἥξει Λακεδαιμονίους πότερον ἐξανδραποδίσασθαι τὴν πόλιν βουλόμενοι ἀντέχουσι περὶ τῶν τειχῶν ἢ πίστεως ἕνεκα.





might not want to destroy or enslave them. By this he held out a measure of hope to the people. Second, he carefully avoided any direct recommendation that the Athenians should consider tearing down the walls, and in fact suggested, by his use of the word ἀντέχειν (“to insist upon”), that the Spartans were acting unreasonably in making the demand. Yet the clear implication of his statement is that they should tear them down if convinced that the Lacedaemonians were acting with pure motives. We see here, as at the trial of the generals, that he acted very cleverly to evade prosecution while advancing his own cause. Finally, he suggested that Lysander be approached rather than Agis as before (in 2.2.11). It is possible that the first embassy went to Agis because he was the devil they knew or because as king he seemed to have more authority. It is perhaps more likely, however, that they thought the king would be more lenient than the admiral, for the latter had not only had all the Athenians captured in the battle of Aegospotami killed but had taken an eager, personal part in the slaughter (2.1.32). That Theramenes chose to go to this more hostile Spartan does not reflect well on him or his motives. In fact, that the choice was a bad one for the city was later proved by Lysander’s consistent support for the Thirty (2.3.14, 2.4.28-29) and by his antagonism toward the democrats in Piraeus (2.4.28-30).

The ongoing narrative supports the idea that Theramenes’ motives were indeed impure. When Theramenes was sent off by the Demos, he spent more than three months with Lysander. When he finally returned,



he reported to the Assembly that he had been detained by Lysander. But Xenophon makes it clear that this was a deception. “After being sent off, he spent even more than three months with Lysander, watching for when the Athenians, because of a lack of food, were at the point of agreeing with whatever anyone should say” (2.2.16).<sup>89</sup> Given Theramenes’ role in this episode as a whole, we should understand that he was not waiting until they were ready to do everything that “anyone” should say, but rather that he himself should say. Now it is true that Xenophon held that one might deceive one’s friends for their good (*Mem.* 4.2.13-19), but to endanger, and indeed sacrifice, people’s lives<sup>90</sup> for one’s own purposes certainly does not fall into the category of acceptable deception. When Theramenes announced to the Assembly that Lysander had ordered him to go to Sparta, they sent him as part of a ten-member embassy with independent authority (πρεσβευτῆς αὐτοκράτωρ, 2.2.17). Once there, the Spartans overruled the allies who wanted to destroy the city, and agreed to peace on the following conditions: the long walls and those of the Piraeus be torn down; all but twelve of the ships be handed over; the fugitives be received back; the Athenians hold the same friends and enemies as the Spartans and follow their lead on land and sea (2.2.20). Theramenes and those with him then returned to Athens and at this

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<sup>89</sup> πεμφθεὶς δὲ διέτριβε παρὰ Λυσάνδρῳ τρεῖς μῆνας καὶ πλείω, ἐπιτηρῶν ὁπότε Ἀθηναῖοι ἔμελλον διὰ τὸ ἐπιλελοιπέναι τὸ σῖτον ἅπαντα ὃ τι τις λέγοι ὁμολογήσειν.

<sup>90</sup> Xenophon records that many were dying because of the famine even before the first embassy was sent to Agis (2.2.11).



point Xenophon highlights again the desperate atmosphere of the city: “a huge crowd gathered around them as they entered in, fearing that they had returned without having accomplished anything, for it was no longer possible to delay because of the great mass of those who were dying of starvation” (2.2.21). On the next day, the ambassadors announced the terms to the Assembly and Theramenes came forward to say that it was necessary to agree to the terms and tear down the walls. Some spoke against him, but the majority spoke in approval and they voted to accept the peace (2.2.22).

Theramenes, then, was successful in bringing to a close the treaty for peace. But he certainly did no favours to the Athenians, for the terms that the Athenians were compelled to accept under Theramenes were much harsher than the terms that were initially offered as a result of the earlier embassy which went through Agis. Of the first offer, Xenophon tells us only that the Athenians were required to tear down ten stades of the long walls (2.2.15). Theramenes’ deal in comparison was a very bad one.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, as a result of the settlement,

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<sup>91</sup>Anna Missiou-Ladi, “Coercive Diplomacy in Greek Interstate Relations,” *CQ* 37 (1987): 336-345, suggests that as *presbeis autokratores* Theramenes and his companions had no role at all in negotiating terms, but were merely to beg as eloquently as possible for mercy from the Spartans. If Missou-Ladi is right, Theramenes could not be blamed for coming back with a poorer deal than the previous one. But there is reason to doubt both her fundamental thesis (that in cases where a city in an inferior position sends *presbeis autokratores* to another city in a superior position, these ambassadors have no independent authority to negotiate) and her specific application of this thesis to the case of the Athenian embassy of 405. Speaking of Theramenes’ role in this embassy, Lysias says that Theramenes came forward and promised that if he should be chosen for an independent embassy (ἐὰν αὐτὸν ἔλθοιτο περὶ τῆς εἰρήνης πρεσβεύτην αὐτοκράτορα...), he would prevent the destruction of the walls and bring an [unspecified] additional benefit to the city (Lys. 13.10). Of course, Lysias is strongly prejudiced against Theramenes, but his point here would have no force at all if in fact a *presbeutes autokrator* had no authority to negotiate terms. See also D. J. Mosley, *Envoys and Diplomacy*





Theramenes ended up in a strategic position in the new order in Athens (2.3.2). This was no doubt his ultimate goal throughout the whole process. His leadership, therefore, is badly flawed, for, just as at the trial of the generals, by astute political maneuvering he advanced his own position to the detriment of the city.

A comparison of Xenophon's account with that of Lysias is instructive. Lysias says that after the city had been reduced to a low estate by Aegospotami, those who wanted revolution in the city (of whom Theramenes clearly was one) were plotting, thinking that they had seized upon a great opportunity for establishing the government according to their own desires (13.6). The original offer (made by Lacedaemonian emissaries in the Athenian Assembly) stipulated that the long walls be destroyed to a length of ten stades (13.8). Then Theramenes came forward and promised that if he were given independent authority as ambassador, he would bring about a peace that would require no destruction of walls nor any other lessening of the city. Moreover, he offered the hope that he would gain some additional benefit for the city from the Lacedaemonians (13.9). He went to Sparta and stayed a long time, leaving them besieged, thinking that if he reduced them to hopelessness, they would gladly wish to make peace on any terms. When he returned, it was discovered that the arrangements he had negotiated involved the destruction of the Long Walls in their entirety, the handing

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in *Ancient Greece*, Historia Einzelschriften, vol. 22 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973), 35.





over of the ships and the destruction of the wall around the Piraeus (13.14).<sup>92</sup> Those who correctly perceived that this arrangement meant the subversion of the democracy and wanted to treat for a better deal were done away with (13.15-16). Though in detail the accounts of Lysias and Xenophon do not correspond exactly, and Xenophon makes no explicit condemnation of Theramenes, the spirit of the two accounts are very similar: Theramenes' detrimental treaty, which he established by callous exploitation of Athens' extremity, showed Theramenes' cavalier attitude toward the well-being of the city for the sake of his own advancement. That Xenophon's account should agree in spirit with the strongly anti-Theramenean speech of Lysias says much about Xenophon's attitude toward Theramenes.

Theramenes' final activity was as one of the Thirty Tyrants. Most scholars hold that here Xenophon exhibits a radical shift in his portrayal of Theramenes. Dillery says that in his account of the Thirty, Xenophon portrays Theramenes as "too good to be believed, ...a treatment which stands in sharp contrast with Xenophon's earlier presentation of him as an unscrupulous politician."<sup>93</sup> To hold this view, however, one must believe that Xenophon takes some sort of a piecemeal

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<sup>92</sup>Lysias explicitly contrasts the stipulations of the former Spartan offer of peace with that arranged by Theramenes: ἦν γὰρ ἀντὶ μὲν τοῦ ἐπὶ δέκα στάδια τῶν μακρῶν τειχῶν διελεῖν ὅλα τὰ μακρὰ τεῖχη διασκάψαι, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ ἄλλο τι ἀγαθὸν τῇ πόλει εὐρέσθαι τάς τε ναῦς παραδοῦναι τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ τὸ περὶ τὸν Πειραιᾶ τεῖχος περιελεῖν (13.14).

<sup>93</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 144. See also Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 97; Pownall, "Shifting Viewpoints," 17; and Bruce M. Laforse, "Xenophon and the Historiography of Panhellenism" (Ph. D. diss., University of Texas at Austin. 1997), 35-40.



approach to the *Hellenica*, and is wholly unconcerned to reconcile blatant contradictions within his text. It seems to me that Xenophon has a much sharper literary sense than this. Although my approach may appear somewhat circular, nevertheless Xenophon provides many indications that Theramenes' virtues in the time of the Thirty are entirely specious, as I will show.

Xenophon begins his record of the rule of the Thirty with a general summary of their activities in the days before the conflict between Critias and Theramenes came to a head (2.3.11-14). They were chosen, he reports, in order to write up the laws by which the city should be governed (2.3.11). An earlier passage says that the Demos decided to choose thirty men who would write up the "ancestral laws" (οἱ πατρίοι νόμοι) by which they should govern.<sup>94</sup> The Thirty were most notable, however, for their willful delay in the implementation of this mandate: "Although they were chosen in order to write up the laws by which they should govern, they continually delayed to write up and publish these [laws], but set up the Council and the other magistracies as they saw fit" (ὥς ἐδόκει αὐτοῖς). The activities of the Thirty can be largely viewed through this lens.

At first, their activities were benign enough, for though they clearly did not use constitutional methods, they eliminated the sycophants who

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<sup>94</sup>Both Diodorus and *Athenaion Politeia* say that the Athenians at this time were to be governed according to their traditional constitution (πάτρια πολιτεία). Xenophon fails to report on the friction that resulted as each political group tried to claim that their particular political preference was the traditional one (Diodorus 14.3; *Ath. pol.* 34-35).



had been such a burden on the aristocrats (καλοὶ κάγαθοί, 2.3.12). “But then they began to plot how it might be possible for them to rule the city as they wished” (ὅπως βούλονται). In order to fulfill this desire they sent messengers to Sparta who persuaded Lysander to dispatch a garrison to help them until, “having gotten rid of the worthless men (οἱ πονηροί, that is, the democrats), they could establish the constitution” (2.3.13). Their words implied that others were to blame for their inability to establish the constitution but that they were eager to have it established. These fair words, however, hid an evil motive, for when Lysander sent Callibius with a garrison, the Thirty were very solicitous toward Callibius “so that he would approve of everything they did.” Now they began to arrest not only the “worthless” men, but those whom they wished (οὓς ἐβούλοντο), that is, whoever they thought would least endure being pushed out of politics and would best be able to garner a large following if he undertook to oppose the Thirty (2.3.14).

In order to evaluate the portrayal of Theramenes, therefore, we must determine to what degree the narrative implicates him in the activities of the Thirty so far. At 2.3.15, Xenophon begins to relate the falling out of Theramenes and Critias. At first Critias agreed with, and was friendly toward, Theramenes. When Critias became reckless, however, Theramenes opposed him, saying that it was not a good thing to kill someone just because he was honoured by the Demos, “since you and I both said and did many things to please the state (that is, during





the democracy)” (2.3.15). So it would seem that Theramenes was involved in the activities of the Thirty at least up to and including the destruction of the sycophants, but was not responsible for the work of rounding up those who were merely potential opponents to the regime. It is uncertain from Xenophon’s record whether or not Theramenes had anything to do with the acquisition of the Spartan garrison, though on the whole it is perhaps more likely than not.<sup>95</sup> Theramenes, therefore, was not responsible for the blatant excesses of the Thirty, but was clearly involved in the establishment and continuation of the Thirty as an illegal and unconstitutional regime.<sup>96</sup>

The ongoing record supports this conclusion. As many continued to be killed unjustly, many were joining together openly and wondering what the (new) constitution would be.<sup>97</sup> Theramenes’ solution was not to actually work toward the establishment of the constitution (which,

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<sup>95</sup>See below, p. 106-7.

<sup>96</sup>Robert J. Buck, “The Character of Theramenes,” *AHB* 9 (1995), 23, notes that the argument at *Hellenica* 2.3.15-16 between Critias and Theramenes related to “how far to go with the purges, not, be it noted, on their morality or propriety.” Buck interprets the struggle between these two not in terms of Theramenes the good, moderate politician versus Critias the bad, extreme politician (as most do) but as the struggle between two calculating, scheming politicians who are vying for power. Buck’s general approach, I believe, is the right one.

<sup>97</sup>I do not think that Warner’s translation (*History of My Times*, 112) does justice to Xenophon’s intent. He translates πολλοὶ δῆλοι ἦσαν συνισάμενοί τε καὶ θαυμάζοντες τί ἔσοιτο ἡ πολιτεία as, “many citizens were getting together in opposition and were wondering what the state was coming to.” But the future optative ἔσοιτο has to reflect a future indicative of direct speech; that is, the people were wondering, What will the constitution be? They were wondering, in other words, when the government would be put on a proper constitutional basis and what that basis would be. Given the context (ἀποθησκόντων πολλῶν καὶ ἀδίκως), their underlying concern would seem to be for a constitutional and legal basis for their own protection.



one can only think, would have been the right way to deal with the concern) but to increase the breadth of political inclusion. He said that unless someone brought in a sufficient number to share in the government, the oligarchy would not survive (2.3.17). In saying “someone” he no doubt meant himself, as at 2.2.16. Theramenes’ speech caused Critias and the Thirty to be afraid, especially of Theramenes lest he become leader of the opposition (2.3.18). In light of Theramenes’ actions at the trial of the generals, this fear would seem reasonable. The Thirty therefore enrolled three thousand men in the government (2.3.18). Theramenes, however, complained that the number was arbitrary and that the oligarchs were basing their rule on force and at the same time were making the rulers weaker than the ruled (2.3.19). But his complaint, though wise, seems disingenuous, for he offered no positive alternative to the action taken.<sup>98</sup> He appears to have been annoyed that they, apart from him, initiated this action which he had suggested. His annoyance likely arose from the fact that the newly enfranchised would have allegiance to those who enfranchised them rather than to Theramenes himself. We should note too that by his language Theramenes seems to be distancing himself from the Thirty (and thus from their unpopularity). In his first complaint “he said that it seemed

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<sup>98</sup>In his speech later, he does enunciate quite clearly whom he deems worthy of inclusion in the government: those who have the means to help the city militarily by the ownership of hoplite weaponry or horse and associated equipment (2.3.48). It may be that we are expected to read this standard back into Theramenes’ complaint in 2.3.19., but by failing to supply a positive alternative in this earlier passage Theramenes appears little more than querulous. We must remember too that he only suggested the broadening of the government after opposition arose.



to *him*, at any rate, to be absurd...”, and in his second he said, “I at any rate, observe that we are doing two quite contrary things...” (2.3.19).<sup>99</sup>

After Theramenes criticized the government for making the rulers weaker than the ruled, the Thirty again acted on his critique without involving him. They held a military review of the entire citizenry, and in the process confiscated the arms of all but the Three Thousand (2.3.20). They no doubt reckoned that in so doing they were depriving Theramenes’ (at least potential) supporters of their weapons. Ironically, Theramenes’ criticisms, which were meant to distance himself from the unpopularity of the Thirty and thus preserve his safety, were being used by the Thirty to strengthen their position at his expense, making him increasingly vulnerable. Theramenes, in other words, was too clever for his own good. Feeling more secure than ever, the Thirty thought it was now possible to do whatever they liked, and began to kill many who were their personal enemies and many for their money. In order to pay for the Spartan garrison, they decided that each of them should kill one of the metics<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>ἐλεγεν ὅτι ἄτοπον δοκοίη ἑαυτῷ γε εἶναι... ὁρῶ ἔγωγε δύο ἡμᾶς ἐναντιώτατα πράττοντας...

<sup>100</sup>Lysias (12.7) states that the Thirty conspired to kill ten metics altogether. Since it is in Lysias’ interest to make the rule of the Thirty look as bad as possible, it is difficult to believe he would under-represent the number of those victimized by the Thirty. It is impossible to know whether Xenophon had heard an account that gave the number of metics as thirty or if he himself was the source of the number. In any case this number certainly fits well with his dramatic purpose to detail the growing conflict between Theramenes and Critias with the rest of the Thirty since the decision for each one of the Thirty to choose a metic provides the context for this last straw in the rift between the two former friends. Diodorus puts the number of metics killed at sixty (14.5.6), but this is most probably an exaggeration typical of such famously scandalous episodes.





and confiscate his goods (2.3.21). They urged Theramenes to choose whomever he wished (2.3.22). He had evidently been left out of the decision-making process and their invitation no doubt had the intention of implicating him in their actions<sup>101</sup> so that he could not further distance himself from them and position himself as the righteous champion of the opposition.<sup>102</sup> When Theramenes refused to do as urged, the Thirty decided that if they were to be free to do as they pleased, Theramenes must be put out of the way. They chose the rashest young men they could find, armed them with daggers, gathered the Council, and waited for Theramenes (2.3.23).

Critias' speech to the Council reveals something about the personality of Theramenes in two ways: first, his blunt evaluation of Theramenes' treacherous nature and protean political allegiances has the ring of truth to it; second, his brutally honest approach forms a pointed contrast to that of Theramenes. His speech begins in the same vein of *realpolitik* as his short speech earlier (2.3.16). There he stated that those who wish to have the upper hand (πλεονέκτειν) must put out of the way those who are most able to hinder them. In this later speech he states

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<sup>101</sup>This is a technique Critias and the Thirty used later, with Critias making the intention explicit: when the Thirty wanted to use Eleusis as a safe haven, they seized the men of the place, brought them to the city and compelled the Three Thousand to vote for their condemnation. Critias explained, "We, gentlemen, are setting up this government as much for you as for ourselves. Therefore it is necessary for you, just as you share in its honours, so also to share in the dangers. Therefore the Eleusinians we have rounded up must be condemned so that you might be bold and fearful with respect to the same things as us" (2.4.9).

<sup>102</sup>This is strongly suggested by their response to his refusal: they immediately decided he must be gotten rid of (2.3.23).





that whenever there is a change in government many people inevitably die (2.3.24). Democracy is a harsh form of government (2.3.25). If someone opposes the present government, therefore, it is right to get rid of him, especially if one of their own is working to undermine the government (2.3.26). So far in the speech(es) of Critias, Xenophon portrays the speaker as very blunt and forthright. Now it is clear that Xenophon does not approve of Critias as a person,<sup>103</sup> nor does he approve of his policies,<sup>104</sup> but he does present him as one who speaks with a sort of honesty.<sup>105</sup> Critias identified accurately that the oligarchy was a form of tyranny and admitted that it was concerned with *πλεονεξία* (2.3.16). He was quite frank about his own hatred of the democracy and was candid about the Thirty's ruthless policy of eliminating not only

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<sup>103</sup>In *Mem.* 1.2.12, Xenophon states that the accuser of Socrates said that Critias was the most rapacious and violent (*πλεονεκτίστατός τε καὶ βιαιότατος*) of all those in the oligarchy, and Xenophon did not wish to dispute this (1.2.13). Xenophon also records the run-ins Socrates had with Critias (*Mem.* 1.2.29-38).

<sup>104</sup>To Xenophon, the good ruler always tries to reconcile his enemies and often succeeds, as seen in the actions of Xenophon's Cyrus the Great. The pattern is established with Cyrus' treatment of the King of Armenia. Cyrus told Cyaxares that his aim in marching against the rebellious King of Armenia was to make him even more friendly than he was before his rebellion (*Cyr.* 2.4.14). As Cyrus was about to march on Armenia, he sent a notice of his intention, thinking that this was the friendlier approach (2.4.32). When Tigranes, the Armenian prince, advised Cyrus that leniency would bring about great goodwill, Cyrus was pleased and remembered his statement of intent to Cyaxares (3.1.31). In the end there was great friendship between Cyrus and Tigranes and the Armenians. After this it becomes Cyrus' very consistent policy to make his former enemies into friends. Critias' approach was the polar opposite to that of Cyrus. His consistent policy was to put out of the way all those who even had the potential to stand in his way.

See also S. Usher, "Xenophon, Critias and Theramenes," *JHS* 88 (1968): 128-135, who says about Critias' statement that bloodshed is necessary in political revolutions that "it is a decidedly un-Xenophontic statement" (p. 132).

<sup>105</sup>Usher, "Xenophon, Critias and Theramenes," 129, says about Critias that "his character was forthright and direct rather than subtle and scheming."



those who worked to undermine the oligarchy, but also those who were merely opposed to it (2.3.25). This suggests to us that his evaluations, though harsh, often bring the light of reality to bear on the situation.

If this is true, it implies that Critias' statements in the rest of his speech about the character of Theramenes are realistic.<sup>106</sup> The main thrust of his ongoing argument is that Theramenes is not just an enemy but also a traitor. He was the one who began the Athenian trust in, and friendship with, the Spartans. He initiated the destruction of the democracy. And he more than anyone incited them to punish those first brought to trial. But then when it became clear that they had become hateful to the Demos, these practices no longer pleased him. He spoke out against them so that he might be safe while they were punished (2.3.27-28). Now the argument could be made (and will be made in Theramenes' own speech) that Theramenes only opposed the Thirty when their policies became excessive. Yet Critias' statements, as far as they go, are supported by Xenophon's narrative: Theramenes was the prime mover in the rapprochement between Athenians and Spartans (2.2.16-23) and though Xenophon does not say that Theramenes was the main instigator of the first trials, he does show that Theramenes was in accord with those early actions of the Thirty (2.3.15). Furthermore, Xenophon

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<sup>106</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 109, writes, "Too many of Critias' statements against [Theramenes] ring true." This is not, however, to suggest that Critias does not speak prejudicially, for his language throughout has an *ad hominem* ring to it. For example he scornfully refers to his opponent as "this Theramenes here" (οὗτοσι Θηραμένης, 2.3.27) and uses charged expressions like "most reckless" (προπετέστατος, 2.3.30).



links Theramenes' disaffection with the Thirty directly to the growing opposition rather than to the actions of the Thirty per se (2.3.17).

Critias went on to speak of Theramenes' past record as a turncoat. He pointed first to the revolution of 411. Theramenes, though he was honoured by the Demos, was most eager to change the democracy to the rule of the Four Hundred and was a leader among them. Then when opposition arose he became the prime leader of the Demos against the Four Hundred (2.3.30). Critias accused Theramenes of having been zealous to lead his companions into things only to change direction when opposition arose (2.3.31). As a result of his changeableness, Theramenes was responsible, Critias asserted, for the oligarchs who were killed by the Demos and also for the democrats who were killed by the oligarchs (2.3.32).

Since the rule of the Four Hundred falls outside the limits of Xenophon's history we cannot compare his narrative to this part of Critias' speech to determine if Xenophon is here presenting Critias' account as accurate. But other sources strongly suggest that Critias' statements accord well with what was generally accepted about Theramenes' role in the constitution of the Four Hundred. Lysias states that Theramenes was most responsible for the setup of the oligarchy of 411 and that he was most favourable towards its affairs (12.65). When, however, he noticed that he was being surpassed by others in the oligarchy and that the people were no longer inclined to listen to the oligarchs, through jealousy of his companions and fear of the masses he





betrayed his former friends and even had some of them put to death. “So great was the extent of his evil that in order to gain credit with them (the oligarchs) he enslaved you (the people) and in order to gain credit with you, he destroyed his friends” (12.67). Lysias was, of course, highly biased against Theramenes for the sake of his case and because of his own losses at the hands of the Thirty. But it is intriguing that this democrat, while speaking to the people, enunciates sentiments about Theramenes strikingly similar to those of the extreme oligarch Critias in his address to the aristocratic Council.

Critias’ statements about Theramenes’ role in the rule of the Four Hundred also accord well with the account of Thucydides, a much less overtly biased source than Lysias. According to Thucydides, Theramenes was a powerful speaker and thinker and was first among those destroying the Demos (that is, in setting up the oligarchy) (8.68.4).<sup>107</sup> When opposition mounted against the oligarchy, many of the Four Hundred became discontented with the regime and would gladly have gotten out of it if they could have done so safely (8.89.2). These men, whose leaders were Theramenes, Aristocrates and others, began to find fault with the state of affairs. They proposed to make the Five Thousand a reality instead of an empty slogan and to establish the government on a wider basis. But this was nothing more than a political manoeuvre (σχῆμα

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<sup>107</sup>καὶ Θηραμένης...ἐν τοῖς ξυγκαταλύουσι τὸν δῆμον πρῶτος ἦν, ἀνὴρ οὔτε εἰπεῖν οὔτε γνῶναι ἀδύνατος. Note the similarity between Thucydides’ ἐν τοῖς ξυγκαταλύουσι τὸν δῆμον πρῶτος ἦν, and Critias’ ἐπρώτευσεν ἐν ἐκείνοις (*Hell.* 2.3.30).



πολιτικόν τοῦ λόγου) for most of them were acting according to personal ambition, each considering himself far superior to his fellows. This is just the sort of thing that especially happens, says Thucydides, in a change from democracy to oligarchy (8.89.3). In the end, each one of them struggled to make himself the chief leader of the Demos (8.89.4).<sup>108</sup> Thucydides in his history has much more detail than Critias in his speech, but they share the opinion that Theramenes was a prime leader in the setup and administration of the Four Hundred, that he turned against this administration for the sake of personal ambition when opposition arose, and that he then strove to become the prime leader of the Demos.<sup>109</sup> To sum up, Critias' speech was not presenting an image

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<sup>108</sup>ἡγωνίζετο οὖν εἷς ἕκαστος αὐτὸς πρῶτος προστάτης τοῦ δήμου γενέσθαι. Note again the echoes in Critias' speech: πρῶτος αὖ τῷ δήμῳ ἐπ' ἐκείνοις ἐγένετο (2.3.30).

<sup>109</sup>There are still broader correspondences between Thucydides' account of Theramenes' role in the government of the Four Hundred and Xenophon's account of his role in the government of the Thirty. Thucydides implies that Theramenes and his party turned on the rest out of concern for their own safety. This is what Critias says about why Theramenes turned against the Thirty. Thucydides says that Theramenes was a prime advocate of widening the government as a way of gaining political stature; Xenophon seems to suggest this very thing, as I have shown, in his presentation of Theramenes' recommendation that the government of the Thirty should be broadened (2.3.18-19). Even Thucydides' general outline of Theramenes' actions (leader in the oligarchy, pressure causing him to find fault with it, then striving to be the popular leader) is reflected in Xenophon, except that when it comes down to the end, though he does win popular support with the Boule (which is as popular as the situation will allow) his ultimate success is thwarted by the ruthlessness of Critias. These many correspondences suggest that Xenophon, when he wrote on the Thirty, was significantly influenced by Thucydides' account of the Four Hundred.



of Theramenes among the Four Hundred which would have been viewed as distorted or inaccurate by those reading it.<sup>110</sup>

Critias also referred to Theramenes' part in the battle of Arginusae and the trial of the generals (2.3.32). He said that Theramenes was ordered to pick up the shipwrecked, did not do so, but then accused the generals and had them put to death to save himself. All this is precisely consistent with Xenophon's account of the incident, as we have seen. When Critias said that Theramenes was not at all to be trusted because he was always looking out for his own advantage with no regard for his friends or for what is good, we should view this a completely reasonable deduction. "If you are wise," Critias told his compatriots, "then you will spare yourselves rather than this fellow." And he spoke the truth, according to the standards of *realpolitik*, for Theramenes truly was out to betray them for his own advantage.

For all its forthrightness, however, Critias' speech contains a significant element of irony. He asked, "How is it possible to spare this

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<sup>110</sup>There are other ancient versions of the rule of the Four Hundred which present Theramenes' part much more positively, (*Ath. pol.* 33.1-2, Diod. 13.38.1-2). Yet these positive sources, unlike Lysias and Thucydides, are later than Xenophon and it is not certain that they reflect opinions which were widespread at the time of the writing of the *Hellenica*. See Phillip Harding, "The Theramenes Myth," *Phoenix* 28 (1974): 101-111. A. Andrewes, "The Arginusai Trial," *Phoenix* 28 (1974): 112-22, especially 120, argues that much of Diodorus' account goes back to the Oxyrhynchus historian, but his arguments are quite speculative, being based on the "moral tone" of Diodorus' narrative. See also Johannes Engels, "Der Michigan-Papyrus über Theramenes und die Ausbildung des 'Theramenes-Mythos'," *ZPE* 99 (1993): 125-55. Christopher Ehrhardt, "Lysias on Theramenes," *AHB* 9 (1995): 125-6, on the other hand, points out that Lysias' attacks against Theramenes in Speeches 12 and 13 indicate that there must have been some popular support for Theramenes, since it appears that Eratosthenes and Agoratus (Lysias' opponents) will use their association with this "moderate" member of the Thirty to plead their case in the popular courts. But it is impossible to quantify this implied support of Theramenes and even Ehrhardt admits that his point is obtained only by "reading between the lines" (125).





one who is obviously always concerned to gain the advantage (πλεονεκτεῖν), showing no regard for the good or for his friends?" In his earlier defense of the severity of his own policies, Critias had said, "It is not possible for those wanting to gain the advantage (πλεονεκτεῖν, that is, Critias and the other oligarchs) not to put out of the way those who are most able to hinder them" (2.3.16). The comparison shows that Critias was now acting true to his policy with respect to Theramenes, for Theramenes was quite capable of hindering the the Thirty. But Critias also condemned himself in his denunciation of Theramenes, for he by his own admission (at 2.3.16) was also guilty of wanting to gain the advantage. He therefore inadvertently declared his own vulnerability and perhaps foreshadowed his own eventual elimination at the hands of the democrats (2.4.19; *sic semper tyrannis*). Furthermore, he unintentionally linked himself to Theramenes: both were tyrants and both were working for the elimination of the other so as to gain the most prominent position in the state; they may have very different approaches, one blunt the other subtle, but they both fall into the same political category of tyrant.<sup>111</sup>

The style of Theramenes' speech, however, contrasts sharply with that of Critias. His approach was elusive and deceptive, just as Critias' was brutally honest and straightforward. Theramenes addressed first the

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<sup>111</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 109, states, "both the attack of Critias and the defense of Theramenes have much in common... and shows that each is more like than unlike the other."





last item of Critias' speech, that of the trial of the generals. "I, of course, did not begin the legal action against them but they said that I was ordered by them to pick up those unfortunate men in the sea battle off Lesbos but did not do so" (2.3.35). Now it is clear from Xenophon's own account that the generals had indeed ordered Theramenes to pick up the shipwrecked (1.6.35). When, therefore, Theramenes stated only that "they said" he had been ordered, he implied that this was merely their claim. It is also clear from Xenophon's account that Theramenes began proceedings against the generals and not vice-versa (1.7.4). Xenophon also reports that Theramenes produced a letter from the generals stating that the storm was to blame for the abortive rescue, which some commentators find suspicious. Andrewes<sup>112</sup> argues that the "quirks" in Xenophon's account of the trial show that he knew of the letter which Diodorus records in which the generals condemned Theramenes for not picking up the shipwrecked (13.101.3). This letter, according to Diodorus, elicited the opposition of Theramenes and was the chief reason for the ultimate condemnation of the generals. The letter produced by Theramenes at the trial was in fact (according to Andrewes) the one referred to in Diodorus. It seems to me, however, that Xenophon did not know of any letter except the one recorded in 1.7.4. He did believe that the generals broached the subject of sending a letter condemning Theramenes (1.7.17), but his narrative explicitly states that the letter

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<sup>112</sup>Andrewes, "Arginusai Trial," 113.



sent did not contain any such condemnation. So Theramenes' statements about his condemnation of the generals manifestly distorted the truth.<sup>113</sup>

Theramenes continued, stating that he had defended himself by saying that the storm prevented them from sailing and made it impossible for them to effect a rescue (2.3.35). This too is a blatant falsehood, for though Theramenes did produce a letter from the generals saying that the storm was to blame, he used it to show that since the generals blamed no one else, they themselves appeared to be at fault (1.7.4). He then said that his defense seemed reasonable to the city,<sup>114</sup> implying that it was indeed reasonable, a sentiment which Xenophon certainly would not support.<sup>115</sup> In claiming that the generals appeared to condemn themselves, Theramenes conveniently neglected to mention that at the trial it was he himself who put this twist on the generals' letter. The reason the generals seemed to condemn themselves, Theramenes continued, was because they claimed that it was possible to pick up the men, yet sailed off without doing so. This again contradicts

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<sup>113</sup>The brazenness of Theramenes' deception is observed in his use of the expression "of course" (δήπου) as if everyone certainly knew that he did not begin the accusations.

<sup>114</sup>Theramenes very carefully and cleverly specifies that his case seemed reasonable to the state (τῇ πόλει), not to the Assembly or to the Demos. Now he did in fact speak before the Demos in the Assembly (1.7.4), but if he had alluded to the democratic context explicitly, his present aristocratic audience might not have found his approval at that time such a commendable thing.

<sup>115</sup>As we have seen Xenophon clearly portrayed the condemnation of the Arginusae generals by the Demos as illegal and irrational. See above, pp. 71-9.



Xenophon's narrative, for according to it, the generals strenuously asserted that, due to the severity of the storm, no one could reasonably be blamed for the failed rescue (1.7.6).<sup>116</sup> Finally to make his version appear more credible than Critias', Theramenes makes the very clever point that Critias was out of town at the time of the trial--engaged in some very un-aristocratic activities no less (2.3.36). Yet, in fact, Critias' account was far more factual than Theramenes'.

It is perhaps significant that Theramenes began his speech by addressing the last item of Critias' speech. Xenophon, in fact, highlights this inversion. Theramenes opened the speech thus: "I will address first, gentlemen, the last item which he spoke against me." Assuming that Xenophon has taken a free hand in the composition of the speech,<sup>117</sup> and purposefully arranged its order, I consider this opening topic to be programmatic for the rest of the speech.<sup>118</sup> In other words, since the

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<sup>116</sup>Note also that Euryptolemus, the ally and defender of the generals, made the same assertion in 1.7.32-33.

<sup>117</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 97, and Peter Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 132 argue convincingly that Xenophon uses a free hand in composing the speech of Theramenes. Usher, "Xenophon, Critias and Theramenes," argues for the historical basis for the speeches of both Critias and Theramenes. But Usher argues much more strongly for the strict historicity of Critias' speech than for that of Theramenes, to which he allows a fair degree of compositional creativity (pp. 133-5). Xenophon provides no statement about the reconstruction of historical speeches comparable to that of Thucydides 1.22.1.

<sup>118</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 97, argues that Xenophon allows Theramenes' speech to contradict his own narrative in order to portray the "positive ethical achievement" of Theramenes' loyalty and true friendliness. I believe Gray is misled in her interpretation of the entire conflict between Critias and Theramenes by her fundamental approach to the *Hellenica*. She says that the "driving force in Xenophon's writing" is "the desire to portray a positive ethical achievement". In fact, Xenophon's desire in the *Hellenica* is mainly to portray the political, military and moral problems which caused the chronic





speech begins with what is so manifestly a self-serving lie, we should be very suspicious of what Theramenes said in the rest of the speech.<sup>119</sup>

In the next section of his speech, Theramenes declared his agreement with Critias that the one who truly was working to destroy the oligarchy was worthy of the severest punishment. He asserted, however, that this condemnation applied to Critias and not to himself, since Critias' actions had made the government weaker, while his own advice would have made it stronger (2.3.37). He claimed to have opposed the attacks against worthy democrats so that others like them would not become afraid and hostile, against rich noblemen so that those like them would not become disenchanted (2.3.38-39), against those zealous for the city so that others like them would not be suspicious (2.3.40), and against the metics so that the other metics might not become enemies of the government. He also claimed to have opposed the confiscation of the weapons of the masses, since that weakened the city. All this sounds

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turmoil found within and among the Greeks states. The clearest way to see this is to compare the account of Agesilaus in Xenophon's *Agesilaus* with Agesilaus' activities in the *Hellenica*. In the latter, Agesilaus is regularly portrayed in a more negative light as compared to the former when the same events are treated (see below, pp. 216-7). History, to Xenophon, is not moral encomium.

<sup>119</sup>We should not make too much of Xenophon's apparent acceptance of deception as proper in certain contexts (*Mem.* 4.2.16-18). Lying is only allowable according to Xenophon's Socrates when someone other than the deceiver will benefit; in Theramenes' speech, his deception, clever though it is, is calculated to benefit only the speaker. Xenophon portrays lying in a very negative light in the *Cyropaedia* (3.1.9). He also clearly approves of the straightforward, honest Polydamas (*Hell.* 6.1) and of Spartan honesty (*Hell.* 6.1.17-18). In the case of both Polydamas and Sparta, the straight-talking parties might have benefitted greatly from a less honest approach. Steven Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1985), 19-20, argues that Xenophon (particularly in the *Anabasis*) displays an acceptance of the traditional Persian antipathy toward falsehood and deception, which antipathy was not prominent in the Greek ethical system.



wise and noble, but his next statement jangles. He said that if the Spartans had wanted the Athenians to be few in number after Aegospotami, they could easily have left no one alive had they but kept the pressure of the famine on for just a short time longer (2.3.41). This reference to the extremity of the famine reminds the attentive reader of just who exactly was responsible for the prolongation of the famine and the resultant weakening of the city and loss of population: Theramenes (see 2.2.16). By this reference to the famine, Xenophon indicates that the altruism of which Theramenes speaks is nothing more than a rhetorical stance.

Theramenes next claimed that he did not approve of the hiring of a Spartan garrison. In his opinion, they should have increased the number of those involved in government to the point where those who ruled might easily overpower those ruled (2.3.42). Xenophon's narrative does not directly contradict this statement, but it does make this statement appear questionable. Xenophon seems to place some importance on the development of the dispute between Critias and Theramenes (2.3.15-23), and yet gives no indication whatsoever that the dispute involved the Spartan garrison. In fact, he does not begin the account of the dispute until after the hiring of the garrison, giving the impression that no tension existed between the two until after the garrison was well in place. Moreover, Theramenes had been the main



collaborator with Lysander to bring about the peace with Sparta, and it was through Lysander that the garrison was appointed (2.3.13).<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, Theramenes' defense to the charge of being fickle rings hollow. He pleaded that he was a steadfast political moderate, neither an extreme democrat or oligarch (2.3.48). But where previously had he ever shown a commitment to any political cause other than his own advancement or preservation? He closed his speech with a challenge to Critias to point out a single occasion on which he undertook with either the extreme democrats or the extreme oligarchs to exclude good men<sup>121</sup> from the government (2.3.49). Now strictly speaking it is true that Theramenes had never deprived good men of participation in the government. His policy was rather to deprive them of their lives. If Xenophon depends on Thucydides for his perspective on the Four Hundred, as I believe he does,<sup>122</sup> then Theramenes' leadership in the Four Hundred implicated him (in Xenophon's mind) in the murderous, tyrannical intrigues of the oligarchs against the democrats recorded in Thucydides 8.36-37. On the other hand, Xenophon, as we

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<sup>120</sup>To be sure, Diodorus records a dispute between Lysander and Theramenes about the garrison (14.3.5), but Diodorus is at great pains to present Theramenes in a consistently positive light, often contradicting Xenophon's account of Theramenes' activity.

<sup>121</sup>By the term "good men" (οἱ καλοὶ τε κάγαθοί) he means those moderately well-to-do or better, who could provide their own hoplite armour or horse and cavalry equipment (see 2.3.48).

<sup>122</sup>Underhill, *Xenophon. Hellenica*, 65, writes that Xenophon's portrait of Theramenes "agrees well with that in Thucydides."





have seen, portrays Theramenes as ultimately responsible for the deaths of the Arginusae generals as he worked in concert with demagogues like Archedemus, Callixenus and Lyciscus.<sup>123</sup>

This is not to say that Theramenes' speech was without a certain merit. Theramenes preached a wise moderation in opposition to the extreme policies of Critias: do not act so harshly and arbitrarily against such a wide range of people or you will strengthen the opposition; widen the base of support for the oligarchy by including in government everyone who can provide hoplite armour for himself (2.3.43-44). How do we account then for the lying wisdom of Theramenes? He was a shrewd politician. He knew that a message of moderation would find a wide audience at that time when the excesses of Critias were so evident. He was again trying to land on his feet and so he alternately lied and preached moderation--whatever worked. And his approach proved very effective, for when he concluded, the Council applauded, showing its approval (2.3.50). Theramenes' speech, therefore, was a model of clever deception: it was skilfully crafted and effectively delivered such that it

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<sup>123</sup>Xenophon calls Archedemus "the foremost popular politician in Athens at that time" (ὁ τοῦ δημοῦ τότε προεσθηκῶς ἐν Ἀθηναίς, *Hell.* 1.7.2). Callixenus as well appears to be of the popular party, for he returned to Athens after the Piraeus party returned to the city (1.7.35). P. J. Bicknell, *Studies in Athenian Politics and Genealogy* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1972), 99, note 33, calls him "a satellite of Cleophon." Lyciscus, otherwise unknown, was clearly a demagogue for he supported the mob's desire to do what it wished by saying that those who opposed the will of the people should be judged with the generals (1.7.13).





convinced the Council (2.3.50).<sup>124</sup> But in reality it was disingenuous, self-serving and false.

It is important for us to emphasize here the nature of the contrast that Xenophon draws between Critias and Theramenes. These two are not presented as the good versus the bad, but as the blunt versus the subtle. Both are lawless and tyrannical in their basic nature, but they differ in style. One is a blunt ideologue and the other a clever politician. And at least part of Xenophon's concern in his presentation of the clash between Critias and Theramenes is to explore which approach is more effective for gaining power. It turns out that during the regime of the Thirty, it was Critias' approach that was ultimately more effective. The clash between these two members of the Thirty in a political context is very similar to that between the two Spartan admirals, Lysander and Callicratidas, in a military context (1.6.1-34).<sup>125</sup> Callicratidas was extremely blunt and straightforward while Lysander was the epitome of subtlety and patience. They were both extremely ambitious, each wanting to be recognized as the unquestioned master of the seas, which was the basis for their rivalry (see especially 1.6.2 and 15). The striking

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<sup>124</sup>The fact that Theramenes' speech was effective should not be viewed as evidence that he was in the right, but rather that he was a very skilled politician. Xenophon often portrays groups being convinced by specious arguments, for example, the Demos by those who spoke against the Arginusae generals (1.7.1-35). Moreover, the body of men convinced by Theramenes was the illegally appointed Boule of the Thirty--hardly a group that Xenophon would assume to have judicial wisdom.

<sup>125</sup>See below, pp. 165-83.



difference between these rivalries is that in the military context it was the subtle one who finally won the day.

After the speech, Xenophon records the death of Theramenes in a narrative that is heavy with irony, much of it surrounding the idea of legality. Critias, for instance, was scrupulously concerned with the law even as he acted with illicit abandon. Knowing that if a vote was held Theramenes would be released, he set up his daggers at the railing of the Council chambers. Then he appealed to the new laws (καινοῖς νόμοις): in them there was a provision that no one on the list of the Three Thousand may be put to death without the vote of the Council, but those outside may be put to death by the Three Thousand (2.3.51). “Therefore,” he said, “I expunge Theramenes from the list with your agreement and we sentence this man to death.” A little later Critias officially turned Theramenes over to the Eleven saying, “We hand over to you this Theramenes who has been condemned according to the law” (κατὰ τὸν νόμον, 2.3.54). Critias’ actions here again point out that the government of the Thirty was thoroughly illicit and tyrannical. But it also illustrates how those who most take the name of the laws to their lips are often those who least live by that which is truly just and lawful.

So too with Theramenes. We have seen that in the trial of the generals and in his activities among the Thirty legality was the least of his concerns. But now at his death he suddenly became very concerned with issues of justice and law. Realizing that he had been



outmaneuvered by Critias, he leapt to the altar and cried out, “I implore you by all that is just (ἱκετεύω τὰ πάντων ἐννομώτατα), that you not allow Critias to delete my name or whichever of yours he wishes, but that both you and I be judged according to this law (ὅνπερ νόμον) which these men drafted concerning those in the list.” When it was expedient for him, the crafty Theramenes appealed to the laws and justice. Similarly, he also became very pious in his last hour<sup>126</sup>: he availed himself of the nearby altar of Hestia; he implored the Council using religious language (2.3.52); he swore by the gods; he accused his opponents of being not only most unjust toward men but also most impious toward the gods (2.3.53); when he was being dragged off he called upon both gods and men to look upon what was being done (2.3.55). It was quite an impressive performance for one who had defiled the Apaturia with his self-serving schemes (1.7.8) and refused to accept the storm after Arginusae as an act of God (see 1.7.33).

Against my consistently negative interpretation of Theramenes, however, many hold that Xenophon presents this man as dying a Socratic death.<sup>127</sup> Laforse writes, “Theramenes’ composure in facing

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<sup>126</sup>There does seem to be a close link in Xenophon’s mind between lawbreaking and impiety. “Indeed lawbreaking is also an act of impiety in Xenophon’s eyes” (Dillery, *History of His Times*, 156).

<sup>127</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 157; Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 12-13; Pownall, “Shifting Viewpoints,” 16-17.





death foreshadows that of Socrates.”<sup>128</sup> But surely the very opposite is true. Socrates, according to Xenophon, was quite content to die and made no attempt to hinder the process: he preferred to die rather than to live (*Ap.* 1); he expressed no interest in discussing his upcoming trial at which his life was clearly in jeopardy for his *daimonion* opposed him when he took thought to plan his defense; he could see the advantages of dying now before the worst ills of old age afflicted him (*Ap.* 2,7,27); at his trial he refused to beg for his life or offer an alternate punishment (*Ap.* 22); after his conviction he turned down his friends’ offer to help him escape (*Ap.* 23); he kept a cheerful and placid spirit throughout the ordeal (*Mem.* 4.8.1-10). Contrast Theramenes. He made a thoroughly unsocratic row as he went. First, he leapt (ἀνεπήδησεν) to the altar of Hestia and hung on like grim death, desperately appealing to the self-interest of the men of the Council in order to compel them to help him (2.3.52-53). When Satyrus and the Eleven came to haul him away they had a hard job of it: “Satyrus was trying to drag him from the altar and the attendants were trying to drag him.”<sup>129</sup> While they were working on him at the altar he kept calling out (ἐπεκαλεῖτο) to gods and men, and when they led him through the marketplace he shouted out to everyone in a very loud voice (μάλα μεγάλη τῇ φωνῇ) (2.3.54-56).

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<sup>128</sup>Laforse, “Historiography of Panhellenism,” 36.

<sup>129</sup>εἶλκε ἀπὸ τοῦ βωμοῦ ὁ Σάτυρος, εἶλκον δὲ οἱ ὑπηρέται.



Xenophon did, however, express admiration of Theramenes for the two *bon mots* he spoke in the face of death (2.3.56). And these indeed were reminiscent of Socrates, for Xenophon records that Socrates too adorned his end with a pair of witty remarks (*Ap.* 23, 28). But does an admirable bit of heroism in the face of death indicate that a person's former actions were admirable? Certainly not, as the example of Anaxibius shows (4.8.32-39).<sup>130</sup> I make two suggestions as to how we are to understand this. First, Theramenes' wit at the end of his life is characteristic of his life as a whole, as Xenophon portrayed it, for in whatever circumstances he found himself, he always had something clever and effective to say. The only difference now is that his words, though certainly clever, are not entirely effective, at least with respect to saving his life. Second, Xenophon may want the last wit of Theramenes to remind us of Socrates not so that we see Theramenes' death as Socratic but so that we mark the stark overall contrast between Socrates and Theramenes. At the trial of the generals we saw how the unjust actions of Theramenes stood in opposition to the just advocacy of

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<sup>130</sup>According to Xenophon, Anaxibius was unqualified to lead (having been given a command merely because he had become friendly with the ephors; 4.8.32), contemptuous of the gods (4.8.36) and careless (4.8.37). He was easily destroyed by an Athenian ambush. Yet his final stand was a noble one: he stood his ground and died fighting in the attempt to allow his friends the opportunity to escape (4.3.37-38). Xenophon's narrative of Anaxibius shows that this commander was an opportunistic, impious slacker. It also shows that he died nobly. Xenophon makes no attempt to whitewash Anaxibius' earlier faults in light of his noble death, nor does he try to downplay or explain away the nobility of his death in light of his ignoble life. Similarly with Theramenes.



Socrates.<sup>131</sup> So here, Theramenes again stands in opposition to Socrates: while honest Socrates went quietly to his undeserved death, dishonest Theramenes went kicking and screaming to his well-deserved death.<sup>132</sup>

So in his death Theramenes illustrated the point that though the wheels of justice may grind slowly they do grind fine.<sup>133</sup> The clever, shifting politician who had so often and for so long remained unscathed in the arena of political intrigue was finally outmatched and outmaneuvered by the ruthless, straightforward ideologue. Not even his most desperate measures could secure his safety as they had before. Theramenes' dispute with Critias illustrates the Thucydidean maxim that when a government changes from democracy to oligarchy, the principals in the new government will soon begin to vie for top spot (8.89.3). Theramenes' fate also makes a pointed political comment, showing how capricious an illegal, tyrannical government can be: it was largely through the efforts of Theramenes that the oligarchy of the Thirty was

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<sup>131</sup>See above, pp. 77-80.

<sup>132</sup>For an evaluation of Diodorus' odd account of Socrates' attempt to save Theramenes (14.5.1-3), see George Pesely, "Socrates' Attempt to Save Theramenes," *AHB* 2 (1988): 31-33.

<sup>133</sup>Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 271, referring to incidents in Xenophon which do not seem to connect impiety with punishment, states (with a nod to *Hellenica* 5.4.1 and *Mem.* 4.4.21), "To Xenophon, then, divine retribution sometimes approaches with a slow foot, but it always does approach in the end." Her observation applies admirably to the case of Theramenes as well.



established, yet in the end he was devoured by the political monster he had created.<sup>134</sup>

It is certainly true that Theramenes was the voice of moderation, such that when he died the Thirty became more unrestrained in their rapacity (2.4.1).<sup>135</sup> Theramenes was also more astute politically than the Thirty, for his advice would have kept them from being destroyed, at least so quickly. His perspective turned out to be insightful, for when he died, the exiles increased and filled Megara and Thebes, and Thrasybulus became leader with many willing followers (2.4.1-43) as Theramenes' speech more or less predicted (2.3.42,44). So Theramenes truly was a restraining influence on the oligarchy. But that did not necessarily make him a noble figure. He attempted to use moderation as a means to gain power, but his attempt to finesse his way to pre-eminence succumbed to the ferocity of the extreme oligarchs. Thus his downfall showed again how extreme the tyranny of the Thirty was: in the earlier oligarchy of 411 there was still a place for subtle political manipulation and so in the democracy during the trial of the generals. But Theramenes was using political means that were ineffective in the

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<sup>134</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 161, states, "Clearly the point of [Xenophon's] treatment of the Thirty is also to illustrate the self-destructiveness of their power." He does not apply this statement to the case of Theramenes, for he considers him to be the sincere voice of moderation who calls the others back from their destructive path, but it well applies.

<sup>135</sup>Note though that this was just one factor, however important, in the increasing rapacity of the Thirty: early on they sent to Sparta for a garrison "in order that they might be able to do what they wished in the city" (2.3.14), and when they took away the weapons of those not enrolled in the Three Thousand something similar is said about their increasing rapacity (2.3.21).





present circumstances when rapacious tyranny was steamrolling everything in its path until it ultimately destroyed itself by its excess. He was not, in Xenophon's mind, the hero of the resistance to the Thirty, for he was dishonest, scheming and altogether too compromised by his own self-serving agenda. The true hero of the day, it turned out, came from outside the Thirty.

### **Thrasybulus**

Thrasybulus, in Xenophon's portrayal, comes across as a much more positive character than either Alcibiades or Theramenes. He was the staunch democrat who represented the very best of the democracy in word and deed.<sup>136</sup> He was also a pious, astute and courageous military commander, whose great accomplishment was to lead the democratic forces of Athens as they drove the Thirty Tyrants from power. His political contributions, however, were arguably more significant than his military, for by his conciliatory spirit and his concern for the laws and constitution of Athens, he established long-lasting peace and order in the city after the great turmoil which followed the loss of the war. On the other hand, Thrasybulus' later accomplishments lacked the same lustre as his earlier ones. His desire to restore Athens to her former

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<sup>136</sup>Thrasybulus is known to us in Thucydides as the energetic and effective stalwart of the democratic party in the army at Samos at the time of the overthrow of the democracy and the establishment of the oligarchy of the Four Hundred at Athens in 411 (8.73-105). Thucydides also presents him as the hero of the battle of Cynossema (8.105).



glory as an imperial power led to activities of questionable justice and to his own death.

The first few references to Thrasybulus in the *Hellenica* are little more than incidental: he was present at the battle of Cyzicus in 410 supporting Alcibiades (1.1.12) and in 407 he led a force that reduced the places along the coast of Thrace that had gone over to Sparta (1.4.9); his efforts evidently found favour with the Demos back home for he was re-elected to the generalship for the next year (1.4.10); later Alcibiades at Samos heard that he had left the Hellespont and was besieging Phocaea (1.5.11). Without doubt Xenophon could have written much more about Thrasybulus' exploits during this period,<sup>137</sup> but in this section of the *Hellenica* the role of Alcibiades overshadows all else.<sup>138</sup> Xenophon next mentions Thrasybulus in connection with his role as one of those assigned by the generals to pick up the shipwrecked after the battle of Arginusae. (1.6.35). Because of their common assignment, the names of Thrasybulus and Theramenes are linked together a number of times (1.6.35; 1.7.5, 18, 31). It is clear from Xenophon's account, however, that Thrasybulus was innocent of negligence with respect to the rescue of

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<sup>137</sup>See for example the much more prominent role given to Thrasybulus by Diodorus in the battle of Cyzicus (Diod. 13.49-51).

<sup>138</sup>The only other Athenian general given any prominence at all in this part of the *Hellenica* is Thrasyllus, but he was highlighted in order to show by his mediocrity the superiority of Alcibiades' generalship, as I have argued in pp. 45-6, above.



the shipwrecked and--unlike Theramenes--was free of involvement in the shameful accusation and condemnation of the generals.<sup>139</sup>

Thrasybulus takes centre stage in Xenophon's account almost immediately after the elimination of Theramenes, with his seizure of Phyle.<sup>140</sup> The close juxtaposition of these two characters who dominate the narrative in their respective sections invites comparison.<sup>141</sup> The differences between these two are marked. Theramenes was impious whereas Thrasybulus' actions were marked by a profound piety. Theramenes' espoused views were consistently oligarchic, however moderate (see 2.3.36-7, 39, 48), whereas Thrasybulus showed the democratic colours throughout.<sup>142</sup> Theramenes' military involvement

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<sup>139</sup>Euryptolemus clearly makes a distinction between Thrasybulus and Theramenes with respect to the condemnation of the generals: he speaks of "Thrasybulus and Theramenes who [ὅς-singular, referring to Theramenes alone] accused the generals in the previous assembly" (1.7.31).

<sup>140</sup>According to *Athenaion politeia* (37.1), the democratic resistance at Phyle arose before the execution of Theramenes. It is difficult to say who is more likely to be factually correct, but Xenophon's order seems a bit more stylized, not bringing in Thrasybulus until Theramenes is out of the picture. See Peter Krentz, *The Thirty at Athens* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 131-152, for a detailed discussion of the thorny problems surrounding the different order of events in the *Hellenica*, *Athenaion politeia*, Diodorus and Justin.

<sup>141</sup>I cannot help wondering also if there is not some significance to the repeated juxtaposition of the names of these two in the aftermath of Arginusae. Thrasybulus' name is linked with Theramenes' four times (1.6.35; 1.7.5, 17, 31), yet he is completely inconsequential to the story. The reference in 1.7.31 is particularly striking, for Euryptolemus is clearly only speaking of Theramenes and yet he mentions the name of Thrasybulus as well. Perhaps Xenophon does this to prepare us for the coming importance of Thrasybulus and to encourage us to ask what the relationship between these two might be.

<sup>142</sup>W. James McCoy, "Theramenes, Thrasybulus and the Athenian Moderates" (Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1970), argues that Thrasybulus was a moderate with a political outlook similar to that of Theramenes. Xenophon (like Thucydides) portrays him, however, as a unwavering democrat.





was negligible, but Thrasybulus was a very effective military leader. Theramenes' deviously self-serving actions were always disruptive and destructive to the city, while Thrasybulus' straightforward, conciliatory approach greatly benefitted the city. Theramenes acted with utter disregard for justice and legality, showing no interest in duly established laws or the foundation of a proper constitution, in contrast to Thrasybulus, whose concern was to see the ancestral laws established in Athens.

According to Xenophon, Thrasybulus set out from Thebes and, with a surprisingly small contingent of seventy men, seized Phyle, a strong fortress (χωρίον ισχυρόν). The small number recorded by Xenophon no doubt adds lustre to the victories accomplished by this group, for the Thirty, he says, came against them with an overwhelming show of force consisting of the Three Thousand and the cavalry (2.4.2). It may be significant that Diodorus, who was not particularly interested in highlighting the virtues of Thrasybulus, reports that he took Phyle with the secret help of the Thebans, and makes no mention of the number that he had (14.32.1). On the other hand, Cornelius Nepos, who is very interested in exalting Thrasybulus' virtues, exaggerated (at least compared to Xenophon) the paucity of his companions by claiming he had "not more than thirty" with him when he took Phyle, and emphasizes how small was the strength of the force which brought about



the freedom of Athens.<sup>143</sup> In spite of their small number, the men at Phyle, successfully defended their position and wounded a number of the attackers. They also conducted a successful raid against the besiegers when a heavy snowfall compelled them to lift the siege (2.4.3).

Xenophon is careful to note the numerical growth of Thrasybulus' forces, for he reports that Thrasybulus' men now numbered seven hundred (2.4.5) and a little later had increased to one thousand (2.4.10). The impression he gives is that Athenians disgruntled with the Thirty were spontaneously swelling the ranks of the opposition. This impression springs from the comments in Theramenes' speech which refer to the flocking of exiles to a leader like Thrasybulus, Anytus or Alcibiades (2.3.42), and from Xenophon's direct reference that the actions of the Thirty were filling Thebes and Megara with refugees (2.4.1). It is likely however that of the seven hundred at Phyle at the time of the attack on the enemy camp only a little more than one hundred were Athenian citizens; several hundreds (probably three) were mercenaries hired by Lysias, and the remaining were foreigners.<sup>144</sup> Xenophon later acknowledges the ethnic diversity of the democratic forces in the Piraeus (2.4.24-25) and employs it positively to highlight the unity in diversity of the democrats. But at this early stage Xenophon may have felt that to

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<sup>143</sup>hoc initium fuit salutis Atticorum, hoc robur libertatis clarissimae civitatis (Thrasybulus, 8.2.1).

<sup>144</sup>Krentz, *The Thirty at Athens*, 83-4. See also A. E. Raubitschek, "The Heroes of Phyle," *Hesp.* 10 (1941): 284-95.



imply that the swelling number of Thrasybulus' force was made up of righteously indignant citizens would enhance the picture of Thrasybulus' movement. In any case, the acknowledgement of mercenaries would not have added to the idealized picture of this group, and so Xenophon is silent.

After his initial successes, Thrasybulus led his seven hundred men out by night. This action reflects well on Thrasybulus, for Xenophon considers the use of the night in military endeavours to be a virtue.<sup>145</sup> Thrasybulus later showed this same virtue in his nocturnal march to the Piraeus (2.4.10). They grounded arms about three or four stades from the enemy camp and remained quiet (ἡσυχίαν εἶχεν). Thrasybulus, the disciplined military commander, remained quiet, in contrast to the rashness of the enemy when they attacked Phyle. The same expression is used of him in 2.4.18. At just the right time, when the soldiers of the Thirty were off guard, Thrasybulus' men snatched up their weapons, attacked at a run and routed the enemy, killing more than 120 hoplites and three cavalymen who were overcome while they slept. The victors set up a trophy, collected up all the arms and equipment of the enemy, and returned to Phyle. Such was their efficiency that when the relief force of cavalry from the city showed up, there was no one around (2.4.7). The military successes of Thrasybulus were significant enough to

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<sup>145</sup>He praises Agesilaus for using the night as if it were day in order to keep his movements and intentions secret (*Ages.* 6.6).



discomfit the Thirty and compel them to establish Eleusis, through another act of gross injustice, as a place of refuge (2.4.8-10).

After this, Thrasybulus moved into the Piraeus. Xenophon is careful to highlight the disparity of the strength of the opposing forces. To oppose Thrasybulus' one thousand, the Thirty sent out the Spartan garrison, the cavalry and the hoplites.<sup>146</sup> When the democrats realized that their own forces were too few to defend the circuit of the Piraeus, they gathered on the hill of Munychia. The two armies lined up opposite and filled the road on both sides, the oligarchs "no less than fifty deep" and the democrats "no more than ten deep." Xenophon's wording makes emphatic the disparity, but there is an element as yet unaccounted for. The democrats had a large force of peltasts and javelin-throwers lined up behind the hoplites, and behind these, stone-throwers (2.4.12). This is a typically demotic fighting force<sup>147</sup> which was gleaned from the Piraeus

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<sup>146</sup>It is difficult to know what exactly the number of this force was. The Spartan garrison was probably seven hundred and the cavalry one thousand (Krentz, *The Thirty at Athens*, 57, 87). If the hoplites were the Three Thousand, then the force would have numbered 4700. It is more likely, however, that the cavalry was made up from the Three Thousand as well and therefore the force would be more like 3700, which still gave them a huge numerical advantage.

<sup>147</sup>Michael M. Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 41, speaks of "the social identification of light-armed troops with the lowest stratum of the population."





itself, and was naturally despised by aristocrats.<sup>148</sup> In the end, however, it proved to be the decisive factor in the battle.

Xenophon does not actually describe the battle except to say that the democrats were victorious and pursued the enemy until they reached level ground (2.4.19). He does, however, use the predictions in Thrasybulus' first speech to serve as a description of the battle, much as Thucydides used pre-battle speeches to analyze and anticipate coming battles.<sup>149</sup> Thrasybulus said that the gods had positioned them advantageously in that the enemy would not be able to throw spear or javelin beyond their front ranks because of the incline. The depth of their forces would also seem to be a factor, though Thrasybulus did not explicitly say this. They themselves, on the other hand, would be throwing downhill upon an enemy that so filled the road that they could not be missed if targeted. While the enemy were retreating the hoplites would be able to strike at will those who were shielding themselves from the missiles (2.4.15-16). Xenophon's description of the battle itself

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<sup>148</sup>Theramenes, for all the apparent insight and foresight displayed in his activities and speeches among the Thirty had no regard for the potential of light-armed citizens. He declared his unchangeable conviction that it is best to make up the government from those who were able to help with horse or shield (that is, hoplite armour) (2.3.48). The implication is that light-armed troops are useless. The present battle in which light-armed troops are crucial points up a limitation of Theramenes' moderate oligarchic position. Later in the *Hellenica* Xenophon refers to the contempt that the Spartans had for light-armed troops and for their allies who feared light-armed troops (4.4.17). He shows soon afterward the folly of this contempt, for the Spartan force at Lechaeum, which despised the largely light-armed troops at Corinth and which neglected to reinforce their own contingent with light-armed troops, were destroyed by the light-armed troops of Iphicrates (4.5.11-17).

<sup>149</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenica II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 144. Pace Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 99.



("[They] were victorious and took up the pursuit as far as the level ground") implies that the battle has already been described accurately in Thrasybulus' speech. In addition, Xenophon's words καταδίωξαν μέχρι τοῦ ὀμαλοῦ suggest that the democrats stopped pursuing when they no longer had the advantage of the slope so carefully described by Thrasybulus in his speech.<sup>150</sup> This limited pursuit shows the disciplined control of the democratic leader which is also portrayed in his calmness in the grounding of arms before the speech as the enemy approached (2.4.12) and in his patient inactivity immediately after the speech (2.4.18). Agitation, rashness and anger are absent. In sum, the speech, together with its immediate context, points up the virtues of Thrasybulus as a military tactician and disciplined general.

This speech also displays Thrasybulus as a great leader in another way. To Xenophon, the most necessary thing for success in battle is confidence and encouragement (see *Oec.* 21.4-8). The commander who is skilled in this is a great commander indeed, and Thrasybulus here proves himself such. He reminded his men that they had recently defeated the men who now stood on the right wing opposite them. He then pointed out that those on the far left were the Thirty who had wronged them and their friends (2.4.13). This reminder was calculated to give the men the boldness of righteous indignation, which Thrasybulus also called forth in

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<sup>150</sup>*Pace* Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 100, who believes that this expression of the extent of the pursuit mainly indicates the limited extent of the slaughter.



his final appeal: "Let us take vengeance on these men for the violence they have done to us" (2.4.17). But in calling to mind the evil of the Thirty, Thrasybulus also gave his men another sort of encouragement: the confidence that the gods had observed the wickedness done by the Thirty and were now allies of the democrats. He provided proof of the gods' favour: in fair weather the gods created a storm at just the right time for them; whenever they attempted some military enterprise the gods allowed them to set up a trophy though they were consistently outnumbered (2.4.14); now the gods had put them in a place where they had a distinct tactical advantage over the enemy (2.4.15-16). Having given such powerful encouragement, Thrasybulus wisely guarded against complacency by declaring that though they had such a great tactical advantage each man should act in such a way that he would in the end be able to recognize himself as most responsible for the victory (2.4.17). He then reminded them of all they had to gain from a victory: homeland, houses, freedom, honours, children and wives. Even the one who dies in battle is fortunate, said Thrasybulus with good democratic sentiment, for even though a man be rich he could not obtain so fine a monument as to die in this fight for freedom and honour (2.4.17).<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Note the similarity of this sentiment to that expressed by Solon concerning Tellus, who was the most happy of men not because of his wealth which was moderate, but because he died a glorious death in battle (Hdt. 1.30.3-4).

In her interpretation of this speech Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 100, emphasizes too much the harshness of the speech. She states that it is "full of the bitter memory of injury" and that on the basis of it "the reader expects a bloodbath". But the contempt expressed by Thrasybulus for those on the right wing (which Gray uses to support her thesis) contains no element of bitterness, and the reference to the Thirty functions mainly to indicate the justness of the democratic cause and the confidence that this should inspire among the democrats. Thrasybulus' prognostications about the battle contain no exhortation





Thrasybulus' references to the gods in this speech function to inspire his men but also to show his piety, which appears to conform to Xenophon's own views in every particular. Thrasybulus said that in fine weather the gods sent a storm at just the right time for them; Xenophon implies the same in his narrative, for he says that the Thirty set out for Phyle in "especially fine weather", but that just when it looked very grim for the defenders of Phyle, besieged and in imminent danger of being starved out as they were, heavy snow drove the would-be besiegers back to the city (2.4.3). Just as the wise and just Euryptolemus recognized divine agency in the storm at Arginusae (1.7.33), so the pious Thrasybulus recognized the same agency in the snowstorm at Phyle. Thrasybulus' statement about the implication of winning in battle though outnumbered (2.4.14) also conforms with Xenophon's views, for Xenophon elsewhere in the *Hellenica* attributes the victory of outnumbered forces to the hand of heaven (7.5.12). Xenophon would also agree with Thrasybulus' view that blatant tactical advantage bespeaks the hand of god (4.4.12).<sup>152</sup> And we find still other praiseworthy expressions of piety in the speech: he used the expression "if god wishes," spoke of leading the paeon, and invoked the war god

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to slaughter or destroy the enemy, but merely confidence-inspiring assertions as to the justice of their cause.

<sup>152</sup>This was a common idea among Athenians to judge from the orators. Jon D. Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 58, writes, "The gods were thought to reveal their goodwill by providing men opportunities for action."



(2.4.17). Thrasybulus truly displays the sort of piety that Xenophon finds commendable.

After the speech of Thrasybulus, Xenophon continues to highlight the piety of the democratic faction and, by implication, of Thrasybulus. Though his men were now sufficiently inspired for battle by his speech, he held back until the prophet determined the will of the god. To Xenophon this is a very important act of piety. Over and over again in the *Hellenica*, those who wait for the right omens before battle are rewarded and those who rush ahead neglecting or ignoring the omens meet a tragic end.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, in the account of the prophesy and self-immolation of the mantis of the democrats (2.4.18-19), Xenophon shows us an extraordinarily powerful religious occurrence associated with Thrasybulus' leadership.<sup>154</sup>

Xenophon also shows Thrasybulus and the democrats to be piously respectful in the aftermath of the battle. He provides us with the curious detail that Thrasybulus stripped the arms of the enemy but not the tunics of a single citizen (2.4.19). They would not impiously mistreat the fallen bodies even of their enemy. This act of restraint was

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<sup>153</sup>See Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 264, especially note 88.

<sup>154</sup>There has been much speculation as to the anthropological and literary background against which this act should be understood. See John Kane, "Greek Values in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," in *Polis and Politics: Essays in Greek Moral and Political Philosophy*, ed. Andros Loizou and Harry Lesser (Aldershot: Avebury, 1990), 3; Michael Jameson, "Sacrifice Before Battle," *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. Victor Davis Hanson (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 214-6; Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 100. Yet whatever the actual background of the story, it clearly serves to enhance the portrayal of Thrasybulus' piety.



not just a pious, but a conciliatory gesture as well, a precursor to further acts of the same sort.<sup>155</sup> Xenophon also tells us that among Thrasybulus' supporters was one Cleocritus, herald of the Eleusinian mysteries (2.4.20). This man was a religious figure of the highest order.<sup>156</sup> He rebuked the followers of the Thirty who were taking back their dead under a truce with a moving speech couched in vivid religious terms. He reminded them that they had shared together in the most solemn religious services, in the sacrifices and in the greatest festivals. He called upon them in the name of the gods of their fathers and mothers to feel some shame before gods and men, and to cease from sinning against the fatherland. He wanted them to stop obeying the "most unholy Thirty." He said that their behaviour was "of all things most shameful, most grievous, most unholy and most hateful both to gods and men" (2.4.20-22). This speech adds powerfully to the atmosphere of piety in which the democrats conduct themselves and puts special emphasis on the civic nature of piety.

The speech of Cleocritus also strengthens the conciliatory atmosphere of the activities of Thrasybulus and his followers. Cleocritus repeatedly makes statements calculated to elicit a fellow-feeling between

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<sup>155</sup>See A. H. Jackson, "Hoplites and the Gods: The Dedication of Captured Arms and Armour," in *Classical Greek Battle Experience*, 242.

<sup>156</sup>"Kleocritus is...a man of the highest public religious office and rank in the Athenian state, second only to the Eumolpid hierophants." Kane, "Greek Values," 3.



the antagonists. He addressed them as citizens.<sup>157</sup> Not only had they shared explicitly religious activities such as services, sacrifices and feasts, but also dances and education and the dangers of war by both land and sea for their common safety and freedom (2.4.20).<sup>158</sup> Cleocritus swore not just by the ancestral gods, but also by their common kinships of blood and marriage and friendship, “for many of us share all these things with one another” (2.4.21). Though it was perfectly possible, he said, for them to live together as fellow-citizens in peace, the Thirty were causing a most shameful, difficult, unholy and hateful war between them. His final appeal is striking for its emphasis on their present shared emotional experience: “But understand very well, that not only you but also we have shed many tears for some of those who now have been killed by us” (2.4.22).

Xenophon next paints a vivid picture of the two camps. In the city, confusion, dissension and suspicion prevailed. The surviving members of the Thirty felt chastened and abandoned, and the Three Thousand were at odds with each other, some strenuously supporting the *status quo* and others firmly advocating the removal of the Thirty and the

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<sup>157</sup>There seems to be a significant emphasis on citizenship in this section: Thrasybulus addressed his followers with the same words (ἄνδρες πολῖται, 2.4.13) as Cleocritus the oligarchs, and those stripped of their arms but not their tunics are called πολῖται (2.4.19).

<sup>158</sup>Note how very emphatic the language of Cleocritus is about their commonality: μετεσχίκαμεν δὲ ὑμῖν καὶ ἱερῶν..., καὶ συγχορευταὶ καὶ συμφοιτηταὶ γεγενήμεθα καὶ συστρατιῶται, καὶ πολλὰ μεθ’ ὑμῶν κεκινδυνεύκαμεν... ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς ἀμφοτέρων ἡμῶν σωτηρίας τε καὶ ἐλευθερίας.





repudiation of their policies. In the end the Thirty were deposed and ten others were chosen in their place (2.4.23). The Thirty left for Eleusis, but the situation did not radically improve in the city. The Ten, with the help of the cavalry commanders, inherited the oversight of men who were very agitated and distrustful of one another. The cavalrymen were on duty twenty-four hours a day, continually in fear of an attack from the Piraeus (2.4.24). The democrats in the Piraeus provide a stark contrast. Their forces, now numerous and diverse, were diligently and unitedly preparing shields of both wood and wicker. We must not be misled here by the widely-held idea that Xenophon was a moderate oligarch or that he held deep-seated aristocratic class and ethnic prejudices.<sup>159</sup> Adherence to this idea might cause us to miss how positive the portrayal of the democrats is here. When Xenophon says that the Piraeans were now many and diverse he seems to mean diverse in class and nationality, for he lists hoplites, horsemen and light troops as present in the army, and speaks of ξένοι as well (2.4.5). The presence of the lower classes and foreigners enhances rather than detracts from the portrayal of the democrats as virtuous, for it shows the strength of this unity in that it arises from such diversity. Within ten days they were able to march out with many hoplites and many light troops, having made an accord that

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<sup>159</sup>To my knowledge no one has ever put forward a credible case showing that Xenophon is a moderate oligarch, though the opinion is almost universally accepted. Unfortunately, the article by Winston Weathers, "Xenophon's Political Idealism," *CJ* 49 (1954): 317-321, 330 has been almost completely ignored. Weathers argues that Xenophon, though having democratic tendencies, has no settled political commitment.



everyone who joined in the battle would receive the right of equal taxation even if they were foreigners. David Whitehead asserts that *ἰσοτελεία* here (and at *Vect.* 4, the only other occurrence of the word in contemporary literary sources) should be understood abstractly, as something near to “liberty, equality and fraternity.”<sup>160</sup> While we might hesitate to stray so far from the concrete meaning of this word, certainly the idea here is that the democrats were working together in an egalitarian and fraternal spirit in stark contrast to the aristocrats. This unity is a prolepsis of the harmony and order that Thrasybulus and the democrats ultimately bring to the city to replace the confusion and disorder of the oligarchs, which did not end with the deposition of Critias and the Thirty.

While the men of the city (except for the cavalry) dared not venture outside the walls (2.4.26), it was the practice of their opponents to go foraging every day and then return to the Piraeus at night to sleep peacefully (2.4.25).<sup>161</sup> The courage and boldness of the Piraeans was growing such that they pressed the attack to the very walls of the city (2.4.27). The high hopes of the democrats, however, were suddenly turned on their head when, in response to embassies from both the oligarchs in the city and the Thirty in Eleusis, Lysander arranged to have

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<sup>160</sup> “*Isoteleia*: a Metaphor in Xenophon,” *Eirene* 16 (1978): 19-22.

<sup>161</sup> Though Xenophon does not explicitly say that their sleep was peaceful, this is implied by the contrast with the men from the city who seemed to get little sleep because of their agitation with one another and their fear of attack (2.4.24).



himself sent out as commander by land and his brother Libys by sea (2.4.28). The position of the democrats now was remarkably similar to that when they were first defending Phyle: they were outnumbered and besieged and the enemy's plan was to cut off their supplies and starve them out. And just as before, help came to them unlooked for, not now in the form of a storm from heaven, but rather in the jealousy of King Pausanias (2.4.29). Though it is not as easy to see divine agency in the workings of human emotions as in a meteorological phenomenon, the striking similarities between the two situations suggest that Xenophon's intention here is to show that the democrats were still on the side of the angels.<sup>162</sup>

Xenophon also continues to show the courage and tenacity of the democrats. Though Pausanias would turn out to be a godsend, from the Piraeans' point of view he and his forces were just another source of fear and dismay. Yet they gamely continued the fight. They refused Pausanias' order for them to disperse, repulsed his first attack and set upon him when he went out from his camp with a very strong force. He counter-attacked with some success, but in the pursuit of his fleeing opponents happened upon the main force of the democrats, whose light troops jumped out first to meet the challenge, throwing their javelins,

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<sup>162</sup>Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion*, 19, points out that the Athenians had a general idea that the gods were on their side and protected them in various ways, including military endeavours. He further writes, "With the exception of Thrasybulus' timely storm, there is nothing in the sources which would strike a modern observer as a 'supernatural' intervention." That is, authors (including Xenophon) often attributed Athenian success in unremarkable circumstances to the activity of the gods. The point is that we should not expect that only an extraordinary event be considered by Xenophon a case of divine intervention.





casting their spears, shooting arrows and slinging rocks.<sup>163</sup> The Spartans, with many wounded and all hard-pressed, withdrew, which inspired the democrats to press the attack with much greater energy (2.4.33). Here again, as at Munychia, the light troops were prominent in the success of the democrats. Thrasybulus quickly marshalled his hoplites eight deep and came to help. Pausanias was now very hard-pressed but when he was able to summon together all the other Spartan and allied forces, his far superior numbers worked against the democrats.<sup>164</sup> Some of the democrats were pushed into the marsh of Halae and the others finally gave way. Xenophon seems careful to avoid saying that they were routed, but in the end 150 Athenians were killed and Pausanias put up a trophy (2.4.34).

As tenacious as the democrats were in battle, however, they were quick to agree to Pausanias' secret overtures for peace (2.4.35). The final terms were that the Athenians would be at peace with one another and everyone could return to his home and possessions except the Thirty, the Eleven and the Ten who originally ruled in the Piraeus (2.4.38).<sup>165</sup> The

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<sup>163</sup>Xenophon uses a striking example of asyndeton to highlight the energy of this attack: καὶ οἱ μὲν ψιλοὶ εὐθύς ἐκδραμόντες ἠκόντιζον, ἔβαλλον, ἐτόξευον, ἐσφενδόνων.

<sup>164</sup>παντελῶς βαθεῖαν τὴν φάλαγγα ἤγεν ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους. Again this is a similar situation to that of the battle of Munychia where the democrats were by far outstripped by the enemy in phalanx depth.

<sup>165</sup>For a much more detailed account of the stipulations of the peace see *Ath. pol.* 39.1-6.



accord was in effect a clear democratic victory, since only those who held official position during the rule of the Thirty were excluded from the general amnesty and open to prosecution. Moreover, the democrats marched up to the acropolis in arms (2.4.39), indicating that they had full control of the city.

Once the accord was put into effect the first act of the Piraeans was, significantly, to sacrifice to Athena on the acropolis (2.4.39). In peace, as in war, the democrats led by Thrasybulus displayed a deep and consistent piety. After the sacrifice, Thrasybulus gave a speech which contained pious and conciliatory undercurrents but which is most notable for its staunchly democratic, anti-oligarchic, political philosophy. He began, "I advise you, o men from the city, to know yourselves." The expression is, of course, a famous maxim from the oracle at Delphi and embodies a principle that was important in Socrates' philosophy.<sup>166</sup> Such an opening strongly suggests that the rest of the speech will contain wise counsel. The main point revolves around the requirements for rulership. The oligarchs, by their usurpation of power, were in some sense claiming superiority, according to Thrasybulus (2.4.40). Thrasybulus was, then, attacking not simply the rule of the Thirty, but the whole philosophical basis of oligarchy (or more accurately, aristocracy) from a democratic perspective. The oligarchs' biggest problem apparently lay in their superior attitude toward the

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<sup>166</sup>See especially, in Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.2.24-40.



Demos. “You should especially know yourselves if you would consider on what basis you have a superior attitude such that you endeavour to rule us.” Thrasybulus then listed the different possible bases for their superiority. Were they more just? No, for the poverty of the Demos had not induced it to act unjustly for the sake of money, while the aristocrats with all their wealth had committed many shameful acts. Perhaps, then it was on the basis of superior courage (2.4.40)? But the best test of this was the outcome of the civil war, which the democrats had won. Was it due to their intelligence? Yet the oligarchs, with wall and weapons and money and the Spartans as allies, had been defeated (or outwitted)<sup>167</sup> by the democrats, who had none of these things. Perhaps they based their superiority on the Spartans? But they had handed the oligarchs over to the Demos, and then abandoned them (2.4.41).

In this last item, Thrasybulus was not saying that the oligarchs were confident in the military help of the Spartans as they were confident in Lysander at 2.4.29. The context is still the moral justification for rule. The idea is that the oligarchs thought themselves superior because of their connection with the virtuous Spartans. Critias, for example, in his speech against Theramenes, justified his actions on the basis that they conformed to the Spartan way of doing

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<sup>167</sup>There is a textual problem here. The manuscripts read *περιελήλυθεν* or *προελήλυθεν*. It probably requires a second person plural passive form of a verb meaning to defeat or outwit, as the editors have generally supplied. See OCT, *ad loc.* and Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika*, II.3.11-IV.2.8, 52.



things (2.3.34). He prefaced his justification with, “It is doubtless agreed that the best constitution is that of the Lacedaemonians.” Elsewhere Xenophon says that all men praise the institutions of the Spartans (*Lac.* 10.8). So Thrasybulus criticized the Spartans not mainly for their failure to preserve the oligarchs but for their moral laxity in the betrayal and abandonment of their allies.<sup>168</sup> In his harshness toward the Spartans, Thrasybulus takes a typically democratic stance contrasting not only with Critias’ approach but also with Theramenes’, who in his defense speech claimed to be acting in the best interests and in accordance with the wishes of the Spartans (2.3.42).

Thrasybulus concluded his speech with an exhortation: “I expect you, O men not to break one of the things you have sworn to, but also to show this, in addition to your other fine characteristics, that you are faithful to oaths and pious.” Most commentators understand Thrasybulus in this last sentence to have switched his audience from the men of the city to the democrats.<sup>169</sup> But there is something to be said for understanding this statement too as addressed to the men of the city.<sup>170</sup> The speech is highly sarcastic throughout. Thrasybulus three

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<sup>168</sup>Note how blunt is his expression: οὕτω κακέῖνοι ὑμᾶς παραδόντες... οἷχονται ἀπὸντες. Xenophon may indeed in this be criticizing Sparta’s moral competence to rule.

<sup>169</sup>Underhill, *Commentary on the Hellenica*, 77; Gray, *Character of Xenophon’s Hellenica*, 104; Buck, *Thrasybulus*, 83.

<sup>170</sup>See Krentz, *Hellenica*, II.3.11-IV.2.8, 155.





times used the same expression with the rather unexpected verbal adjective in -τέος when he spoke of their superior attitude (μέγα φροντέον (ἐστίν), “you just *had* to think yourselves superior,” 2.4.40,41 *bis*); he asked a very obvious rhetorical question (καὶ τίς ἂν καλλίων κρίσις τούτου γένοιτο ἢ ὡς ἐπολεμήσαμεν πρὸς ἀλλήλους;) followed by another that was even more pointedly sarcastic (ἀλλὰ γνώμη φαίτ’ ἂν προέχειν, οἱ ἔχοντες καὶ τεῖχος καὶ ὄπλα καὶ χρήματα καὶ συμμάχους Πελοππονησίους ὑπὸ τῶν οὐδεν τούτων ἔχόντων περιείληφθε;); he used ironical δὴ in the next sentence (41). His last sentence then should also be understood sarcastically: “since your other fine characteristics are so obvious, why not add this to your repertoire, to be faithful to your oaths and pious.” Not only the content of Thrasybulus’ teaching but also the manner of its presentation was calculated to humble his audience. Since humility is, of course, the prerequisite of knowing oneself, and self-knowledge was the initial concern of this speech, we should judge the speech as very effective. Thrasybulus, in fact, was fulfilling the role of Socrates, who often humbled those around him by ridicule in order that they should know themselves.<sup>171</sup> This democratic humbling of the aristocratic element of the state paved the way for harmonious co-existence in the future.

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<sup>171</sup>See especially the case of Euthydemus, *Oec.* 4.2.1-40.



After the directly quoted part of the speech, Xenophon provides a summary of the speech as a whole (which appears again to assume the oligarchic men of the city as the principal auditors): "Saying these and other such things, he also said that they should not be alarmed about anything, but should follow the ancient laws." Thrasybulus displayed two virtues here: an irenic, conciliatory spirit and a commendable devotion to the traditional laws. These virtues are in marked contrast to the characteristics of the oligarchs, whose principle of exclusion was extreme and harshly enacted, and whose tyrannical antinomianism was pervasive. Thrasybulus' reference to the ancient laws (ἄρχαίοι νόμοι) appears to be of particular significance. After the fall of Athens, the Demos decided to choose men to write up the ancestral laws (πατρίοι νόμοι, 3.2.1). The Thirty, however, exhibited no interest in writing up such laws. They did apparently write up some laws, but Critias significantly (according to Xenophon) called them "new laws" (καινοὶ νόμοι, 2.3.51). The laws of Thrasybulus' reference were the very opposite of Critias'. The indication, therefore, is that under the restored democracy of Thrasybulus the ancient, ancestral laws were finally established.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Both democrats and oligarchs could employ the term πατρίοι νόμοι (and its equivalent πατρία πολιτεία) to support their own constitutional position. See Thuc. 8.76.6, Andoc. 1.83, *Ath. pol.* 29.3, 34.3; Diod. Sic. 14.3 and M. I. Finley, "The Ancestral Constitution," in *The Use and Abuse of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1987): 34-59, especially 36-40. When employed by oligarchs the term meant the constitutional arrangement that applied before the changes of Ephialtes and Pericles (see *Ath. Pol.* 29.3). When used by democrats it referred to the arrangement which prevailed just previous to the institution of an oligarchy (whether that of 411 or 404, see Thuc. 8.76.6). Thrasybulus certainly used it in the latter sense.



And these laws, together with Thrasybulus' conciliatory spirit, accomplished order and stability in the city, for Xenophon makes note of the Demos' peaceable behaviour afterwards. When those at Eleusis hired mercenaries, the Athenians went up en masse, killed the generals leading the insurrection, but reconciled the others who were involved. It might be argued that the killing of the generals was a harsh measure. But perhaps we see Xenophon's true intent when we compare this execution of generals with that after Arginusae; now the generals killed were those disrupting the peace of the established order and betraying their sworn oaths; now their execution was swift, direct, just and effective in restoring harmony to the city. In the end there was reconciliation and they swore oaths to remember no wrongs and dwelt together in harmony keeping their oaths until Xenophon's own day (2.4.43).<sup>173</sup>

In displaying these positive characteristics of generosity to the defeated and adherence to the laws, Thrasybulus embodied the virtues of the Demos. Magnanimity was a virtue that the Demos ascribed to itself in general, and this particular instance of it was often pointed to with

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His use of ἀρχαίοι instead of the more usual πατριοι is probably to be explained by Xenophon's desire to directly contrast his laws with those of the Thirty (which were νέοι).

<sup>173</sup>We should probably not make too much of Xenophon's comment in 3.1.4 that the Athenians sent off three hundred cavalrymen to assist Thibron (at his request) in the Asian campaign of Sparta in 399 thinking that for them to be abroad and to die would be good for the democracy (see Dillery, *History of His Times*, 24). Rather than serving to call into question the stability of the settlement of 403, Xenophon may have intended it to illustrate how limited the support of the Athenian democracy was for the Spartan alliance in that she only sent out those she considered expendable. If my suggestion is correct, 3.1.4 provides a picture consistent with Thrasybulus' (and the Demos') anti-Spartan position rather than one inconsistent with Xenophon's statement of 2.4.43.





pride by the orators.<sup>174</sup> Also, the democracy was made great by its adherence to the laws, as Euryptolemus passionately reminded the Demos (1.7.29).<sup>175</sup> In Thrasybulus' restoration of the democracy we observe the democracy at its best in contrast to the democracy at its worst after the battle of Arginusae. In that earlier time Theramenes, the political chameleon, was the key player and the embodiment of all that was wrong with the government at that time; in the restoration of the democracy Thrasybulus, the stalwart democrat, was the main character and the one who most fully represented in personal form all that was good about the democracy.

At 2.4.43 the first major section of the *Hellenica* comes to an end. Up to this point the focus of Xenophon has been overwhelmingly fixed on Athenian affairs. After this point he switches his focus to Spartan affairs. His ultimate purpose in this first section, therefore, is to show how the Athenians, through all the turmoil of the last days of their empire and of the rule of the Thirty, managed to achieve a stable political settlement. Where Xenophon ends this first Athenian section of his

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<sup>174</sup>See K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974), 190-5 for magnanimity in general and 193-4 for popular pride in the magnanimity displayed by the Demos in the settlement of 403.

<sup>175</sup>It was inherent to Athenian democracy to hold the laws in high regard. "The size, structure and procedures of a democratic city-state being what they were, it was easier than it would be nowadays to regard the law as expressing the collective will and to treat 'legal'/'illegal' as virtually congruent with 'right'/'wrong' (Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, 185-6). Pericles in his funeral oration makes much of Athenian democratic adherence to and reverence for the law, both the written and unwritten (Thuc. 2.37.3)



work has wide ranging implications for the work as a whole. If, as Tuplin holds,<sup>176</sup> Xenophon is mainly concerned in the *Hellenica* with ἀρχή (empire, hegemony) in the Greek world it is hard to see why he would include a long and detailed account of the rule of the Thirty and the overthrow of it by the democrats, for these episodes concern the internal affairs of Athens. Tuplin asserts that the purpose of this section is to show the negative role of Sparta's imperialistic interference in the internal politics of Athens,<sup>177</sup> but a careful reading of the text shows that though Sparta's involvement is a significant subtheme, the main emphasis is on the determinative role of the Athenian politicians Alcibiades, Critias, Theramenes and Thrasybulus.<sup>178</sup> We see this right from the beginning of the rule of the Thirty, when Xenophon reports that it seemed good to the Demos to choose thirty to establish the ancestral laws (2.3.1,11), where other accounts emphasize the Spartan role in the establishment of the Thirty (see Diod. 14.3.5). Xenophon likewise downplays the role of Thebes in support of the democrats, remaining virtually silent on this matter (compare *Hell.* 2.4.2 with Diod. 14.32.1).

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<sup>176</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, especially 33-6.

<sup>177</sup>*Ibid.*, 43-7.

<sup>178</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 147, says that Xenophon, in distinction from other sources, portrays the rule of the Thirty more as "part of the internal history of Athenian politics."



Thrasybulus' great accomplishment according to Xenophon, therefore, was the establishment of order in Athens. This is what he emphasizes at the end of Thrasybulus' accomplishments in 403 (2.4.43). All the characteristics of Thrasybulus emphasized in the narrative relate to this accomplishment. His conciliatory spirit and respect for the laws obviously do so. His democratic values were also significant, for he sought to be inclusive and draw in everyone who would live by the established laws. His direct and effective military methods allowed him to conquer the forces which had destroyed the peace of the city and then to quell those who sought to disrupt the peace established. Even his piety worked toward the same end, for fidelity, justice and orderliness flow from a life which is ordered by a proper respect for the gods.

Thrasybulus is not seen again in the *Hellenica* until the events of the year 395. When the Persian satrap Tithraustes sent bribe money to the Greeks in order to stir up opposition to Sparta on the home front, certain men in Thebes, Corinth and Argos took the money (3.5.1), but the Athenians refused. They were eager for the war nonetheless "thinking that it was their prerogative to have dominion" (3.5.2).<sup>179</sup> Other sources in one way or another say that Athens received this bribe money.<sup>180</sup> "Xenophon may have denied Athenian acceptance of bribes in order to

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<sup>179</sup>The text here (νομίζοντές τε αὐτῶν ἄρχεσθαι) is indecipherable. I have translated the emendation of Laves, νομίζοντές αὐτῶν τὸ ἄρχειν εἶναι, which is preferred by Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenica*, II.3.11-IV.2.8, 196.

<sup>180</sup> *P Oxy.* 7.2; *Plut., Ages.* 15.6; *Paus.*, 3.9.8.



highlight the Athenians' dream of a restored empire."<sup>181</sup> The Thebans became the ones who actually instigated the war by cleverly and deviously provoking the Spartans (3.5.3-5). In these events the Spartans were not blameless, for Xenophon reports that they were happy to have a pretext for attacking Thebes since they were angry at the Thebans for a number of reasons (3.5.5). But the Thebans were much more to blame. They had been suborned by Persian gold, had acted covertly to disrupt the peace and had broken the treaty of peace previously sworn to.<sup>182</sup>

The Thebans then sent ambassadors to Athens to persuade the Athenians to help them in their war with Sparta. The Theban speech was manipulative, and cleverly exploited the propensities of the Demos, most notably the desire for Empire. That Thrasybulus enthusiastically accepted the premises of this speech tells us much about Xenophon's portrayal of the man.

In order to allay the negative feelings against Thebes for her support for the destruction of Athens at the conference of Spartan allies after Aegospotami (2.2.19), the Thebans claimed that that action was the responsibility of a single Theban who happened to be sitting on the council of the allies at the time of the conference, while the decision not

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<sup>181</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 196.

<sup>182</sup>Xenophon says that the Boeotians began their intrigues "knowing that the Lacedaemonians would not want to break the treaty with the allies unless someone would begin a war" (3.5.3). The clear implication is that the Boeotians, in contrast to the Spartans, had no such inhibition of breaking the treaty.





to march out with the Spartans against the Piraeus was by the vote of the entire city (3.5.8). It is, however, very unlikely that the Thebans would allow a single person to speak on behalf of the city without clearly knowing the considered opinion of the government back home. Moreover, Xenophon's own narrative does not support the Theban claim that their vote for Athenian destruction was incidental: "Many of the other Greeks, but especially the Corinthians and Boeotians, spoke against the Athenians, that they should not be spared but destroyed" (2.2.19). The Theban claim that the whole city had been enthusiastic for the well-being of the Piraeans was also specious, for Xenophon reports that the Thebans refused to support Sparta in that instance because they feared the power that Athens' capitulation would give to Sparta (2.4.30). The Thebans also claimed that the Spartans were now attacking them largely because of this refusal of support. Yet Xenophon clearly shows that Theban machinations were the main reason for Spartan ill-will (3.5.3-6).

Much of the rest of the speech played on the Athenian desire for Empire. "Everyone knows, Athenians, that you want to take up again the empire which you had formerly," the Thebans said (3.5.10). With this as their theme, they pointed out all the weaknesses and injustices which were part of the Spartan hegemony and how easy it would therefore be for the Athenians to snatch the leadership of Greece from Sparta (3.5.10-14). The manner of argumentation is intriguing: the Athenians know how unjust and therefore how unstable the Spartan



has noted that Thrasybulus and his democrats launched their attack against the pro-Spartan oligarchs from Thebes, that the Thebans refused the Spartan call for military assistance against the Piraeans and that the Thebans had covertly worked to start a war with Sparta. How, we might very reasonably ask, had the Thebans been staunch and worthy allies of the Spartans? And, more to the point, why would an alliance with them be particularly helpful to the Athenians? Subsequent events show that the Theban boast was an empty one: in the first phase of the war against Sparta they were extremely unstable (3.5.21-22) and yet acted with great insolence (3.5.24).

The Thebans stated next how much easier it would now be to overthrow the present Spartan hegemony than it was for the past Athenian empire to be overthrown. The language used is highly suggestive. The Thebans said that the *πλεονεξία* of the Lacedaemonians was more easily overthrown than the *ἀρχή* of the Athenians and that while the Athenians had ruled their subjects (*ἡρχεστε*), the Lacedaemonians rapaciously dominated (*πλεονεκτοῦσι*) theirs. Throughout the speech the Thebans used language which pointed up the immorality of Spartan imperial activity,<sup>184</sup> and insisted that in coming

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<sup>184</sup>The Spartans deprived the Eleans of much land and cities. Though the Corinthians, Arcadians and Achaeans at the request of the Spartans shared in all the dangers toils, dangers and expenses of the war against Athens, the Spartans made no return to these allies of authority or honour or money. They acted despotically toward their allies who were previously free (3.5.12) and deceived those whom they took away from the Athenians, giving them a double measure of slavery instead of freedom and tyrannizing them through harmosts and decarchies (3.5.13).



to the aid of the Thebans the Athenians would be helping the oppressed.<sup>185</sup> They no doubt used such language to give the Athenians confidence that they would be fighting on the side of the right in opposing Sparta. Yet it again raises the question of the nature of Empire. Was the past empire of the Athenians itself not a *πλεονεξία*? What would prevent a future Athenian Empire from being a *πλεονεξία*? As a final appeal, the Thebans baldly stated that to heed their advice would be much more to the benefit of the Athenians than of the Thebans (3.5.15). It is hard to believe that Xenophon would expect his readers to believe this was anything other than a self-serving lie.

On the whole this Theban speech was self-serving, disingenuous and unbelievable. It clearly would have been foolish to accept its premises. Yet the Demos did so enthusiastically. The reason is obvious: the Athenians were blind with the desire for Empire. Thrasybulus became the Demos' spokesman who answered to the vote. Here he again functions as the personal embodiment of the Demos, not now however at its best. He pointed out that though the Piraeus was unwalled, they would run the risk to give back to the Thebans a greater favour than they themselves had received. "For you," he said, "merely refrained from going to war with them against us, but we will fight with you against them if they attack you." In stating this, Thrasybulus was speaking like a good democrat, for the democracy prided itself in returning more favour than

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<sup>185</sup> Note especially the recurring use of the verb *ἀδικέω* (3.5.10, 14 *bis*).





that received.<sup>186</sup> But more importantly, his magnanimity underlines his enthusiasm for the enterprise.<sup>187</sup> He, representing the people, was willing to put the city at great risk for the hope of a restored empire, which hope was a particularly Athenian democratic one.<sup>188</sup> That he would do this in spite of the danger and their unpreparedness highlights into what foolishness the desire for Empire was leading the city. So here the quintessential democrat embodies the flawed side of the democratic character which is so ready to enter in upon dangerous enterprises for the sake of Empire, enterprises which are ultimately foolish in that they inexorably lead to injustice.

After the conference at Athens, Thrasybulus continued to enjoy leadership in the city for a short time. He was sent out as general of the Athenian forces who fought at Nemea in the spring of 394<sup>189</sup> and was probably also the Athenian general at the battle of Coronea later that

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<sup>186</sup>See the Funeral Oration, where Pericles says that Athenian democratic friendship is based on the free and generous bestowal of χάρις (Thuc. 2.40.4).

<sup>187</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 110, believes that Thrasybulus' response here emphasizes the true generosity and forgiveness of the Athenians. Buck, *Thrasybulus*, 97, characterizes it as surly and inappropriate to one who had been kindly treated in the past by the Boeotians. Both, I think, misconstrue Xenophon's intention.

<sup>188</sup>See Buck, *Thrasybulus*, 11-12.

<sup>189</sup>At Lysias 16.15, Mantitheus, commending his own bravery at the battle of Nemea said, referring to Thrasybulus, "I withdrew later than that solemn fellow from Steiria who has been rebuking everyone with cowardice." (ὕστερος ἀνεχώρησα τοῦ σεμνοῦ Στεيريῶς τοῦ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις δειλίαν ὠνειδικότος.)



same year.<sup>190</sup> Thrasybulus, however, was less than successful in these enterprises. This lack of success together with the rising influence of Conon led to an eclipse of his leadership.<sup>191</sup> In 392, however, the Persians imprisoned Conon (*Hell.* 4.8.16) and the Athenians subsequently looked again to Thrasybulus for leadership. They sent him out (probably in 391) with a fleet of forty ships to further Athenian interests in the Aegean and elsewhere.<sup>192</sup> On this mission he perished.

Xenophon chooses to ignore Thrasybulus' role in the battles of Nemea and Coronea, though he records both in some detail (4.2.15-23; 4.3.15-21). Yet in the naval expedition Thrasybulus is prominent. The reason may be that he went to the earlier land battles as the commander only of the Athenian contingent of the anti-Spartan alliance. But another selection process may be at work. I suggest that Xenophon views Thrasybulus' role in the Aegean and beyond as in keeping with the character of this quintessential democrat in that his naval activities were essentially imperialistic. Thrasybulus' enthusiasm for the extension of Athenian influence among the islands and on the seaboard

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<sup>190</sup>R. Seager, "Thrasybulus, Conon and Athenian Imperialism," *JHS* 87 (1967): 95-115, especially 99.

<sup>191</sup>See especially Barry S. Strauss "Thrasybulus and Conon: A Rivalry in Athens in the 390s BC," *AJP* 105 (1984): 37-48.

<sup>192</sup>For the date see George Cawkwell, "The Imperialism of Thrasybulus," *CQ* 26 (1976): 270-7, especially 273-4.



in 391, therefore, was the same as that in his response to the Theban ambassadors' speech in 394.

Thrasybulus distinguished himself by three things on this expedition: effective generalship, the desire to magnify the city of Athens, and a constant preoccupation with raising money. As an effective general he chose his military objectives judiciously (4.8.25), carefully prepared his forces before battle, most notably with his effective encouragement (4.8.28), won the battle of Methymna and followed it up by winning over various cities and plundering the lands of those who resisted (4.8.30). His greatest accomplishments, however, were not military, but diplomatic. He reconciled the Odrysian king to an Odrysian chieftain, and then made both friendly to Athens (4.8.26). He went on to make the Byzantians, Chalcedonians and Lesbians friendly (4.8.27-9). Xenophon also highlights Thrasybulus' concern to increase the power and prestige of his city by stating that he took thought to do some good for the city and to make other cities favourably disposed to Athens (4.8.26).<sup>193</sup> The raising of funds also looms large among Thrasybulus' preoccupations: he re-established the ten-percent toll on ships sailing from the Pontus (4.8.27);<sup>194</sup> his speech to the Mytilenians and allies had

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<sup>193</sup>ἐνόμισε καταπράξαι ἂν τι τῇ πόλει ἀγαθόν... νομίζων καὶ τὰς ὑπὸ τῇ Θράκῃ οἰκούσας Ἑλληνίδας πόλεις φίλων ὄντων τούτων μᾶλλον προσέχειν ἂν τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τὸν νοῦν.

<sup>194</sup>Cawkwell, "Imperialism of Thrasybulus," 270, states that "the tithe on the Pontic traffic... impl[ies] imperial control of the seas." Underhill, *Commentary on the Hellenica of Xenophon*, 161, concerning this event, states, "Thrasybulus' ambition evidently was to re-establish the Athenian Empire on its old footing."



fund-raising as a major interest (4.8.28);<sup>195</sup> he raised money for his troops by plundering various lands and collecting money from various cities (4.8.30). In the end it was this that caused his demise, for at Aspendus his troops did some plundering of the country in spite of the fact that the Aspendians had already made a contribution; in anger the Aspendians cut down Thrasybulus in his tent.

The description of the actions of his soldiers repays closer examination. Xenophon uses the word ἀδικέω to describe the soldiers' deed.<sup>196</sup> This is a very unusual word to use if he simply wanted to say that the soldiers plundered or pillaged the fields of the Aspendians. Under its entry for this word, *LSJ* has no category which suggests "plunder" or related ideas. When Diodorus records this incident he follows Xenophon closely, but uses the more expected δηϊόω of the actions of the soldiers.<sup>197</sup> I suggest that Xenophon employs this word purposefully. Thrasybulus' naval expedition is clearly characterized as imperialistic and preoccupied with the acquisition of money. The act of brigandage at Aspendus is the culmination of this preoccupation.

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<sup>195</sup>Buck, *Thrasybulus*, 116, writes of this speech, "In its concentration on money, finances and the 'bottom line' it also probably reflects the preoccupations of Thrasybulus or any other Athenian general of the time: getting enough funding to carry on the war with Sparta; and building up the Empire again."

<sup>196</sup>ἤδη δ' ἔχοντος αὐτοῦ χρήματα παρὰ Ἀσπενδίων, ἀδικησάντων τι ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν τῶν στρατιωτῶν...

<sup>197</sup> χρήματα δ' εἰληφότος αὐτοῦ παρὰ τῶν Ἀσπενδίων, ὅμως τινὲς τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἐδήωσαν τὴν χώραν (14.99.4).





Furthermore, the Boeotian speech at Athens portrayed Empire as involving πλεονεξία through αδικία, as we have seen. And this is exactly what we get at Aspendus, with the soldiers committing αδικία in their quest to get more from the Aspendians. So Thrasybulus, in Xenophon's view, does not die because he was slack and let his soldiers get out of hand,<sup>198</sup> but rather because he became involved in an act of αδικία which is typical of the quest for hegemony. We should note that the single fault of Thrasybulus was not a simple moral failure, but one that had profound political implications.

Xenophon's attitude in this regard is illustrated by his *De vectigalibus* which appears to have been written with a concern similar to that of the *Hellenica*.<sup>199</sup> For example, in *De vectigalibus* Xenophon speaks of the confusion (τάραχη) that has now fallen upon Hellas (5.8);

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<sup>198</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenica*, II.3.11-IV.2.8, 162, links Thrasybulus' experience with that of Thibron who allowed his soldiers to plunder their allies, and speaks of the "negative example of Thrasybulus." Yet our author treats the cases quite differently. Xenophon shows his disgust for the unruliness of Thibron in letting his soldiers plunder those friendly to the Spartans: κατηγοροῦν γὰρ αὐτοῦ οἱ σύμμαχοι ὥς ἐφείη ἀρπάζειν τῷ στρατεύματι τοὺς φίλους (3.1.8). He also presents the life and manner of death of Thibron as characterized by slackness (4.8.18-19). In contrast, Xenophon clearly does not blame Thrasybulus for the same, and throughout this section (and everywhere else he shows up in the *Hellenica*), he emphasizes the discipline and energy of Thrasybulus. Moreover, if Xenophon did blame Thrasybulus for slackness here, we would not expect the positive epitaph which follows the report of his death. Note, in comparison, that the epitaph of Thibron is scathing: "The pleasures of the body ruled over him" (4.8.22).

<sup>199</sup>Both Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 33 and especially John Dillery, "Xenophon's *Poroi* and Athenian Imperialism," *Hist.* 42 (1993): 1-11, make a strong case for interpreting the *Hellenica* (or at least from 2.3.11 on) in the light of *De vectigalibus*.



this, of course, is the concluding theme of the *Hellenica*.<sup>200</sup> Xenophon is also much concerned about Empire, money and *adikia*. At the beginning of the *De vectigalibus* he refers to statesmen who say that they know what is just (τὸ δίκαιον) as well as the next person, but who claim that on account of the poverty of the masses, they are compelled to be somewhat unjust (ἀδίκαιότατον) with respect to the cities (1.1). Xenophon attempts to show that it is possible to supply the needs of the democracy through peaceful means rather than through the profits of Empire. He addresses the concern that lasting peace would mean less power, glory and acclaim in Hellas (5.2). He speaks of those who wish the state to take up again her former hegemony and think that this is better accomplished through war rather than peace (5.5). His solution is for Athens to gain prominence through peace and through reconciling other states which are at war. Then she will achieve power, glory and acclaim without troubles, risks and expense (ἄνευ πόνων... κινδύνων... δαπάνης, 5.8). Xenophon, in *De vectigalibus*, assumes that the financial needs of the democracy must be met, appreciates and supports the desire for pre-eminence, but expresses profound disillusionment--military man though he is--with traditional ways of supporting the democracy and gaining eminence. The character of Thrasybulus in the *Hellenica* fits this pattern nicely. He is a traditional Athenian democrat who patriotically

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<sup>200</sup>The expression from the *De vectigalibus* is, νῦν δέ γε διὰ τὴν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι ταραχὴν παραπεπτωκέναι... The *Hellenica* says, ἀκρίσια δὲ καὶ ταραχὴ ἔτι πλείων μετὰ τὴν μάχην ἐγένετο ἢ πρόσθεν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι (8.5.27).



advances the cause of the state by supplying for her needs through the re-establishment of hegemony. Note that Xenophon clearly avoids giving the impression that Thrasybulus was guilty of harming the interests of the city to benefit himself and his friends on his naval expedition, which he was accused of by others (Lysias 28.4-8). Later Xenophon indicates that the Athenians back home had a keen appreciation of the gains of Thrasybulus: "Fearing that all the good work done by Thrasybulus in the Hellespont might go for nothing..." (4.8.34). But his military methods, noble as they were, were ultimately flawed and his death illustrates this.

Xenophon provides Thrasybulus with a succinct but glowing obituary: "And thus Thrasybulus died, who has the reputation of being a very good man indeed" (4.8.31).<sup>201</sup> That Xenophon gave Thrasybulus such a positive epitaph need not surprise us. Some assume that Xenophon admired Thrasybulus for his Panhellenism.<sup>202</sup> But there are more obvious reasons for Xenophon's admiration. He was an energetic and disciplined military commander and the great and pious democratic hero of the overthrow of the Thirty,<sup>203</sup> by which he brought a just order to Athens. He was a staunch Athenian patriot who wanted more than

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<sup>201</sup>καὶ Θρασύβουλος μὲν δὴ μάλα δοκῶν ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς εἶναι οὕτως ἐτελεύτησεν.

<sup>202</sup>Those who take this view seem to assume that Xenophon is anti-democratic and therefore needs some other political source for his admiration. See especially Cawkwell, "Imperialism of Thrasybulus," 275-7.

<sup>203</sup>I cannot agree with Buck, *Thrasybulus*, 13, when he says, "As an anti-democrat [Xenophon] is no great admirer of Thrasybulus' actions in restoring the democracy twice."





anyone else to extend the power and glory of his beloved city. All these characteristics come out very strongly in Xenophon. His only flaw was the pursuit of Empire, for he was not able to accomplish on the international scene what he had at Athens, for he failed to bring an ordered hegemony to the revived Athenian Empire because he was misled by the πλεονεξία of military imperialism. Perhaps this is why Xenophon tempered his praise of Thrasybulus slightly, commenting not that he “was” a good man, but that “he had the reputation of being” a good man.<sup>204</sup>

### Summary

Each of the three Athenian leaders treated in this chapter has a major and distinctive role in the political pilgrimage of Athens. When Alcibiades enters the narrative of the *Hellenica*, Athens and the states of Greece are being tossed about by the winds of war which have little prospect of ceasing. He brings great hope to the Athenian cause; yet when he exits, his city is on the verge of a devastating defeat. He fails to bring a resolution to the turmoil of war in favour of his city through faults which arise mainly from his arrogance.

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<sup>204</sup>See Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 175, note 140. We should perhaps not, however, make too much of Xenophon's use of δοκέω here, for at *Symp.* 9.1, Lycon says of Socrates, καλός γε κάγαθός δοκεῖς μοι ἄνθρωπος εἶναι and at the end of the *Memorabilia* (4.8.11) Xenophon says of Socrates, ἐμοὶ... ἐδόκει τοιοῦτος εἶναι, οἷος ἂν εἴη ἄριστος τε ἀνὴρ καὶ εὐδαιμονέστατος.



Theramenes also contributes to the downfall of Athens. He uses his impressive political skills to preserve himself at the expense of the victorious Arginusae generals. The generals who replace those condemned are not equal to the task of defeating Sparta or even of maintaining the stalemate between the two cities; thus Aegospotami. After the defeat of Athens, Theramenes employs his political skills in such a way as to ensure that no stable order is established at Athens. He wants personal prominence and so participates in the anti-constitutional rule of the Thirty. Since it is impossible for those with a tyrannic nature to share power peacefully, he comes into conflict with Critias, the other dominant member of the Thirty, and the conflict between these two becomes part of the disorderly state of the city. His devious political maneuvers, however, are outmatched by the straightforward brutalities of his opponent; his downfall only increases the turmoil and injustice in the city.

Finally Thrasybulus appears, whose piety and courage overcome the oligarchic tyranny and whose commitment to reconciliation and justice establishes a constitutional settlement of great permanence. His later exploits form a sort of epilogue to his life: he continues to strive to advance the cause of his city, but his efforts, misguided in their attempt to extend the influence of his city through coercive means, suddenly fail. And so he too fails to lead Greece to an orderly political state and becomes one more of those who show outstanding leadership skills and



greatness of character but who are nonetheless unable to bring peace and order to the cities of Greece.

Each of these characters displays in his person and activities something fundamental about his city. Alcibiades embodies Athenian arrogance: his outstanding brilliance and the successes that spring from it reflect that of Athens, as do his subsequent complacency and sudden downfall. Theramenes in turn brings out all that is bad about the democracy as well as the oligarchy. In the trial of the generals he is able, by his political savvy, to manipulate the Demos into unjust and irrational decisions detrimental to its own well-being. In the oligarchy, he prevents the establishment of a proper constitution which would safeguard the well-being of the state. Thrasybulus embodies in every way the ideals of the democracy: he embraces all classes and establishes a constitution which guarantees the rights of all citizens. He also embodies the democratic desire for Empire and the folly of such desire. To Xenophon, it seems, we can learn much about the character of a state by looking to its most prominent leaders.



## CHAPTER TWO

### SPARTAN INDIVIDUALS

#### **Introduction**

Commentators on the *Hellenica* usually evaluate Lysander and Agesilaus according to how they live up to Xenophon's moral and military ideals. They generally deem Lysander either "good" or "bad" and Agesilaus "good" by this standard. That there is such a dichotomy of opinion about Lysander and that Xenophon points up many shortcomings of Agesilaus, however, should cause us to question this approach. Xenophon's picture of these Spartan leaders becomes much more intelligible when we realize that his broader concern is to analyze how their strengths and weaknesses either add to or detract from the quest for a settled political order in Greece. In the characterizations of Lysander and Agesilaus we again observe Xenophon's tendency, revealed also in Alcibiades and Thrasybulus, to focus first on the strengths, virtues and positive potentialities of a major character before carefully allowing the narrative itself to reveal his flaws and shortcomings. This tendency accords well with Xenophon's overall purpose in the *Hellenica* to show how, in spite of the great strengths and potential of her leaders, Greece was not able to find a stable political order. Furthermore, Lysander and especially Agesilaus seem to embody the strengths and weaknesses of the Spartan state similar to the way Alcibiades, Thrasybulus, and Theramenes embodied various aspects of the corporate character of Athens. In Lysander we observe an imperial ambition and





lawlessness that seems to become a characteristic of his state, and in Agesilaus we see one who combines great nobility and pervasive flaws, which combination also characterizes Sparta. Thus Xenophon illustrates again his view that the sort of leader a city has determines the nature of its polity (*Vect.* 1.1).

The shortcomings of the leaders of Athens provided Sparta with the opportunity of winning the war and gaining pre-eminence over all Greece and perhaps even beyond. But the main concern for Xenophon was not who would win the war, but rather who would bring stability to the political chaos of the Greek states. Lysander with his skill and discipline proved equal to the task of winning the war, but not of bringing stability to Greece as a whole. Agesilaus acceded to the throne near the beginning of the Spartan hegemony, and became more than any other the embodiment of Sparta in this period. He showed clear signs of the abilities and virtues necessary to lead Sparta to a just and stable order; indeed his virtues at first seemed to offer the hope of leading Sparta to dominance over the great empire of Persia. But in the end his broad vision of world-wide dominance was hobbled by his pettiness. And so Sparta languished morally, militarily and politically and did not live up to her political potential.

### **Lysander**

Lysander appears first in Xenophon's narrative just after Alcibiades has been restored to favour in Athens and has received extraordinary



military power as ἡγεμῶν αὐτοκράτωρ and his skill as general plays an important role in Alcibiades' sudden reversal of fortune. Lysander is in many ways the Spartan counterpart to Alcibiades: he, like Alcibiades, is possessed of extraordinary abilities; he takes command of his city's forces at a time they are at a very low ebb and quickly reverses the situation; he displays certain irregularities in action and character, which ultimately leads to his downfall and the degrading of his city's prospects. Lysander is the Spartan who bids fair to lead his city to undisputed hegemony, but whose hopes fail of their promise.

The *Hellenica*'s portrayal of Lysander has much to do with his ambition. He sought extraordinary power in the state and beyond, and this led to his own downfall and to the decrease of Sparta's power and the stability of her Empire. Xenophon's approach to Lysander should be viewed in the light of *Mem.* 2.6.16-27. In this passage, Socrates discusses the problem of friendship between good men. The discussion assumes that good men (καλοὶ καγαθοί) are characterized by love of honour and will therefore compete with one another in the endeavours in which honour is won, which leads to hateful strife rather than friendship. Socrates' solution is that though emulous men are rivals for good things, friendliness prevails among the καλοὶ καγαθοί when they choose to obtain a moderate amount rather than to be lord of everything (22). He emphasizes that in the political arena good men are best able to enhance themselves and do good to the state when they join together in



friendship to work for such. Herein lies the failure of both Lysander and those with whom he came into conflict: they neglected to show moderation in their desire for honour and refused to work together in the pursuit of that honour which would benefit themselves and their city.<sup>1</sup>

Lysander first appears in the *Hellenica* at 1.5.1 when he replaced Cratesippidas as navarch. He took control of the fleet at Rhodes, but then went to Ephesus where he waited until Cyrus arrived in Sardis. Lysander may have chosen Ephesus as his base of operations specifically because he desired close relations with the Persians, especially Cyrus.<sup>2</sup> Lysander's main request of Cyrus was that he should prosecute the war as enthusiastically as possible (1.5.2).<sup>3</sup> Cyrus responded that his father had commanded him to do precisely what the Spartans were asking, and that he himself had nothing in mind except to do everything that Lysander suggested. He underlined his enthusiasm with a catalogue of the resources at his disposal: he had come with five hundred talents for

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<sup>1</sup>Steven Johnstone, "Virtuous Toil, Vicious Work: Xenophon on Aristocratic Style," *CP* 89 (1994): 219-40, suggests that Xenophon's interest in self-disciplined moderation is directed to the aristocratic elite as a social class. He believes that in *Mem.* 2.6 Xenophon seeks to inculcate moderation of the competitiveness between elites in order that they might retain their superior position in the polis. But this conclusion goes beyond the evidence, for Xenophon's expressed concern at *Mem.* 2.6 is how moderation can enhance friendliness among the καλοὶ καγαθοὶ to the benefit of both the individual and the city as a whole, not to a particular class within the city.

<sup>2</sup>Detlef Lotze, *Lysander und der Peloponnesische Krieg* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 15, 25.

<sup>3</sup>He and the Spartan ambassadors also complained about Tissaphernes, but this complaint was probably that Tissaphernes was dragging his feet in the war against Athens. See above, pp. 39-40.





the war effort; if that ran out, he would use his own money; if this too ran out he would cut up his throne of silver and gold (1.5.3). Yet he was not speaking sincerely, for when the Spartans asked for the doubling of the sailors' pay, Cyrus balked and made excuses (1.5.5). Cyrus seems to be speaking here in the style of the notoriously faithless Tissaphernes. In Thuc. 8.81.3, Alcibiades reported that Tissaphernes claimed he would turn his bed into money if necessary to support the Athenians in the war, just as Cyrus here claimed he would forfeit his throne to support the Spartans. In *Hell.* 1.1.9, Tissaphernes came to the Hellespont claiming that the king ordered him to make war on the Athenians, in the same manner as Cyrus in our present passage. The similarities make Cyrus' words ring disingenuous and accord well with his subsequent refusal to live up to his words. We should also note that in *Hell.* 1.4.3-7, Cyrus prevented Pharnabazus from fulfilling his oath to the Athenian ambassadors, an act which again does little to commend his honesty.<sup>4</sup>

Lysander, however, was not discouraged by Cyrus' refusal. He remained silent at first, but after dinner, when Cyrus asked what he could do to most gratify Lysander, the Spartan replied, "If you would add one obol to the wage of each sailor" (1.5.6). So effective was Lysander's strategic patience that Cyrus not only increased the wage to four obols from three, but also gave Lysander the back pay that was owing and the

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<sup>4</sup>Cyrus is pictured less positively in the *Hellenica* than in *Oec.* 4.18-19, and *An.* 1.9. But see Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 82-86, who shows that there may well be a dark side to the *Anabasis'* Cyrus.



men a month's wage in advance (1.5.7). The extent of Lysander's success with Cyrus is again emphasized by the Persian prince's refusal to even talk to Tissaphernes, who came on behalf of the Athenians (1.5.9). The overall effect of Lysander's action here was very positive for the Spartan war effort: "The army was much more enthusiastic, but the Athenians hearing these things were disheartened" (1.5.7-8). Xenophon later underlines the detrimental effect on the Athenian navy in his report of what Conon did upon receiving the fleet: "When Conon arrived on Samos and took over the fleet, which was disheartened, he manned seventy triremes instead of the former number which was more than one hundred" (1.5.20).

Some are reluctant to acknowledge that Xenophon here gives Lysander credit for the positive military repercussions of his actions. Westlake, while affirming that the friendship of Cyrus was historically very important to the Spartan war effort, believes that Xenophon included this story of Lysander and Cyrus mainly "because of its dramatic qualities."<sup>5</sup> Gray suggests that this incident "serves to highlight Lysander's [personal] achievement rather than contribute to an analysis of the war."<sup>6</sup> She is right, I believe, in seeing an emphasis on the personal achievement of Lysander, but this achievement ultimately

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<sup>5</sup>Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 260-1.

<sup>6</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 18.



shows how Lysander's skills and abilities helped the Spartans defeat the Athenians in their great struggle. Due acknowledges Xenophon's emphasis on the military advantage that the Cyrus incident procured for the Spartans, but identifies Lysander's "personal charm and ability to make friends" as that aspect of his character which wins the advantage.<sup>7</sup> I believe Xenophon rather emphasizes Lysander's discipline (in being patient) and his intelligence (in perceiving and seizing the opportunity which arose).

We must be careful, however, in how we view Lysander's effectiveness here. Gray asserts that the purpose of this incident is "to demonstrate the nature of good leadership" and that Lysander shows himself a good commander in that he is more concerned "for the welfare of [his] men, than for his own profit."<sup>8</sup> J. L. Moles speaks of Lysander's "skilful, tactful and *unselfish* handling of Cyrus" (emphasis mine).<sup>9</sup> But to see this as an example of selfless devotion to the common cause is to view this incident in isolation, for as we shall see, Lysander ultimately used his friendship with Cyrus for personal ends which were quite harmful to the larger Spartan interests.

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<sup>7</sup>Bodil Due, "Lysander in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," *C&M* 38 (1987): 53-62, especially 54-6.

<sup>8</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 22, 17. Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika*, 134. similarly says, "This first story about Lysander shows him to be a good leader, concerned about his men."

<sup>9</sup>J. L. Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas," *JHS* 114 (1994): 70-84, especially 71.



Lysander used the same two characteristics of patience and intelligence which won him the friendship of Cyrus to win the battle of Notium. But now we see the discipline of Lysander portrayed not just in his patience but also in his orderliness. Although Lysander had now increased his fleet from seventy to ninety, he made no rash moves, but prepared the fleet for maximum readiness. He put the fleet in order (συνετέτακτο), drew the ships onto shore, and remained quiet, repairing and drying out the ships (1.5.10).<sup>10</sup> Xenophon highlights Lysander's disciplined patience with the statement "he remained quiet" (ἡσυχίαν ἦγεν). Just as he had been silent before Cyrus, waiting for the right opportunity (1.5.6), so he was quiet now, awaiting the same.<sup>11</sup> His opportunity came when Antiochus sailed out with his own and one other ship, apparently in the attempt to provoke Lysander to action (1.5.12).<sup>12</sup> Lysander, however, refused to be provoked and at first (τὸ μὲν πρῶτον) cautiously sent out only a few ships to pursue Antiochus. When the

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<sup>10</sup>For the importance of drying out and repairing triremes for military efficiency, see J. S. Morrison and J. F. Coates, *The Athenian Trireme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 230-2.

<sup>11</sup>To remain quiet at the right time was a virtue also of Thrasybulus during his opposition to the Thirty. At 2.4.6 and 18 Xenophon reports that "he kept quiet" (ἡσυχίαν εἶχεν(v)).

<sup>12</sup>Andrewes, "Notion and Kyzikos," 19-20, notes Xenophon's lack of concern to explain the rationale for Antiochus' actions. He speaks of the "unmotivated idiocy which is all that Xenophon gives us." See also Paul Pédech, "Batailles navales dans les historiens grecs," *REG* 82 (1969): 43-55 and H. R. Breitenbach, "Die Seeschlacht bei Notion (407/06)," *Hist.* 20 (1971): 152-171.





Athenians began to send out more ships to support their commander, right then (τότε δὴ) Lysander, marshalling (συντάξας) all his ships, sailed against them (1.5.14). These time references highlight the cautious intelligence of Lysander and are reminiscent of those found in 1.5.6.<sup>13</sup> The Spartans, fighting in good order (ἐν τάξει), eventually routed the Athenians, who fought in disarray. When Alcibiades returned, and drew up all the Athenian ships before the harbour of Ephesus as a challenge to the Spartan fleet, Lysander patiently refused to do battle because his fleet was smaller than the Athenians'. But he was no coward or idler, for after Alcibiades sailed back to Samos, he sailed north, avoiding the Athenian fleet, and took Delphinium and Eion (1.5.15), objects well within the bounds of his present strength.

Xenophon's account of the battle of Notium exhibits much more concern than those of Diodorus and Pausanias to emphasize the patience and subtlety of Lysander. According to Diodorus (13.71.3), Lysander heard that Alcibiades was not with the fleet at Notium, and, thinking that this was a good opportunity to do a deed worthy of Sparta, set sail with all his ships at once against the ships of Antiochus. Pausanias (9.32.6) uses this battle as the prime example of Lysander's σοφία, but his cleverness simply involved waiting until Alcibiades was gone and planting in Antiochus the confidence that he was worthy to fight a sea battle with the Lacedaemonians.

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<sup>13</sup> ὁ δὲ Λύσανδρος τότε μὲν ἐσιώπησε· μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεῖπνον...



When Lysander's term as navarch ended, the Spartans sent Callicratidas out to replace him (1.6.1). Callicratidas is a controversial figure. Commentators generally recognize that Xenophon sets up a contrast between him and Lysander and the discussion usually hinges on which of the two Xenophon approves and which he disapproves. Opinions vary considerably: some believe that Xenophon portrays Callicratidas positively--mainly because of the panhellenism shared by the author and the Spartan commander--and Lysander negatively;<sup>14</sup> others believe the opposite.<sup>15</sup> Moles and B. Laforse, while downplaying the importance of the role of panhellenism, hold that Callicratidas is a mixture of negative and positive, though they have a decided tendency to emphasize the positive, if only because they perceive that Callicratidas has suffered unjustly at the hands of his detractors.<sup>16</sup> But I do not believe that Xenophon preferred one to the other, for he is mainly interested to contrast the characters of Lysander and Callicratidas--the former patient and cunning, the latter swift and bold--and to note the

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<sup>14</sup>Underhill, *Xenophon. Hellenica*, xxiv-xxv; Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*," 261; Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 79; G. Ronnet, "La figure de Callicratidas et la composition des *Helleniques*," *Rev. Phil.* 55 (1981): 111-21; Jean-François Bommelaer, *Lysandre de Sparta. Histoire et Traditions* (Athens: École Française D'Athènes, 1981), 86-8; Paul Cartledge, *Agisilaus and the Crisis of Sparta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 79-80. 190.

<sup>15</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 10-12; Due, "Lysander in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 56-7; Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 22-24, 81-83; Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.11*, 145-6.

<sup>16</sup>Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas," 70-84; Bruce Laforse, "Xenophon, Callicratidas and Panhellenism," *AHB* 12 (1998): 55-67.



sharp competition for military honour between them. But the contrast and competition between these two has a significance that extends beyond the personal, for Xenophon's concern seems to revolve around which of these two approaches--the cunning or the bold--is ultimately more effective in bringing military victory and political hegemony to Sparta. This contrast, as previously noted, is very similar to that between Theramenes and Critias.<sup>17</sup>

The conflict between these two Spartans is immediately evident. As Lysander handed the ships over, he told Callicratidas that he was handing over the ships as master of the sea (θαλαττοκράτωρ) and victor in the sea battle (ναυμαχία νενικήκως). Although Lysander's efforts had met with a good deal of success, his claims were certainly exaggerated. He was perhaps justified in his claim to be conqueror in the sea battle,<sup>18</sup> since he had been victorious--albeit in a minor way--in the battle of Notium. But he manifestly did not control the seas, for he (wisely) refused to fight the assembled Athenian fleet, even after Notium, and his successes at Delphinium and Eion were north of Ephesus, suggesting that he avoided expeditions south, which would have exposed him to the Athenians at Samos. Moreover, the claim to be θαλαττοκράτωρ would

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<sup>17</sup>See above, pp. 109-10.

<sup>18</sup>Note that Callicratidas did not challenge him explicitly for claiming this, but rather that he claimed θαλαττοκρατεῖν (1.6.2).





be excessive even if Lysander did in fact control the seas.<sup>19</sup> Callicratidas bluntly and effectively refuted his claim, saying that if Lysander sailed past the Athenian fleet at Samos and handed the ships over at Miletus then he would admit that he was master of the sea (1.6.2). Lysander, of course, refused, showing that his bragging fell short of reality. So Lysander strove for more honour than was rightfully his, and Callicratidas refused to grant him the honour he claimed.

Lysander's refusal of Callicratidas' challenge requires further investigation. The outgoing navarch said that he would not interfere (πολυπραγμονεῖν) while another held command. Gray asserts that Xenophon uses Lysander's statement as an indication "of his moderation in his love of honour."<sup>20</sup> But in fact the statement indicates the opposite, for it is heavily ironic, since Lysander had put in place the means for the systematic subversion of Callicratidas' command. When Callicratidas was preparing to attack the enemy, he had to deal with an internal problem first, for the friends of Lysander were opposing him: not only were they complying with his wishes unenthusiastically, but they were disseminating among the Greek cities in Ionia the opinion that

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<sup>19</sup>The word is only used twice in Greek literature previous to the present passage, at Hdt. 5.83.2 and Thuc. 8.63.1, both times referring to states (Aegina and Chios respectively). The famous thalassocrats before Lysander were Minos and Polycrates, both monarchs. According to Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas," 72, therefore, "inasmuch as Lysander is a thalassocrat, whether actual or potential, his status is immeasurably greater than a traditional Spartan commander."

<sup>20</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 24.



the Lacedaemonians were making a big mistake in changing navarchs (1.6.3-4). This concern about the change in navarchs was a thinly veiled attack on Callicratidas and commendation of Lysander. Xenophon does not state that Lysander organized this subversion, but the ongoing narrative strongly implies it: Cyrus, the personal friend of Lysander, refused to see Callicratidas (1.6.7); Callicratidas accused Lysander of having given back to Cyrus all the leftover money (1.6.10); and later Xenophon states that Lysander had personal ambitions with respect to the cities of Asia (3.4.2). Xenophon's avoidance of an explicit reference to Lysander's part in the subversion is for dramatic effect: the narrative itself suggests that Lysander was so secretive that no overt evidence of his scheme was apparent.

But Callicratidas was a very different sort from his predecessor and so he countered secretive plotting with direct confrontation. He gathered the Lacedaemonians together and addressed them in a speech (1.6.5). This speech was blunt, effective and contained an implied contrast between Callicratidas and Lysander. Callicratidas stated first that he was content to stay at home. This implies that he was a good, traditional Spartan (see *Lac.* 14.2) unlike Lysander, who was not content. He said that if Lysander or someone else wished to make out that he was more experienced in naval affairs, he would not hinder it. Now this statement was somewhat disingenuous, for Callicratidas had already tried to prevent Lysander from claiming to be *θαλασσοκράτωρ*. But again, in saying that he cared nothing about the claim to superior



seamanship, he set himself up as the opposite of Lysander. Callicratidas then turned to the topic of obedience to Sparta: he had been sent out by the home city and could do nothing but fulfill his orders to the best of his abilities. The suggestion here is that those who oppose Callicratidas' command (most significantly, Lysander) were undermining the home government, to which he himself was most obedient. Callicratidas' last statement was a threat: "With respect to the objects of my ambition and the things for which the city is blamed (for you know what they are as well as I do), take counsel whether I should remain here or sail home to tell them how things stand here." This threat cowed the opposition, who did not dare say anything other than that he should do what he had been sent by the authorities back home to do (1.6.6). There are negative and positive aspects to this speech.<sup>21</sup> Positively, the speech is effective, has a real laconic elegance about it and expresses sentiments about obedience which Xenophon and his audience would have found winsome. Negatively, Callicratidas is somewhat disingenuous and attempts to threaten rather than win over his audience.

When Callicratidas asked Cyrus for money to maintain the fleet, he was told to wait for two days. This offended his honour and he stomped off, lamenting the sorry state of the Greeks that they fawned on the barbarians for the sake of money. He declared that if he got safely

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<sup>21</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 81-2 and Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 146, are too negative in their assessments of this speech and Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas," 73-74 is too positive.



home he would do his utmost to reconcile the Lacedaemonians and Athenians (1.6.7). His action here is again in stark contrast to Lysander. Admittedly, Lysander was not snubbed in the same way as his successor, but he also was put off by Cyrus when he requested (additional) money. Yet when he was refused he quietly and patiently waited for the right opportunity. Callicratidas, however, left immediately, making loud, pompous proclamations on his way.

This episode brings out again rivalry between the two Spartan commanders, for it appears very likely that Cyrus' rebuff of the second Spartan commander was due to the intrigues of the first. When Lysander visited Cyrus, he was received immediately, for Cyrus clearly valued the alliance with the Spartans against the Athenians. A year later Cyrus refused to see Callicratidas although it seems unlikely that he needed the support of Sparta any less now than before. Why the change in attitude? No doubt it was the covert activities of Lysander.<sup>22</sup> Cyrus' later trust in Lysander supports this conclusion (2.1.14). Just as Lysander had won the Lacedaemonians in Asia over to a personal allegiance to himself against Callicratidas, so he had won Cyrus.

Some think Xenophon portrays Callicratidas as very noble for his

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<sup>22</sup>Laforse, "Xenophon, Callicratidas and Panhellenism," 66, states that Cyrus' aloof reaction to Callicratidas "suggests collaboration with Lysander. Indeed that there was collaboration between Lysander and Cyrus against Callicratidas is not only feasible but highly likely."





refusal to toady to the barbarian,<sup>23</sup> others believe he presents him as a fool for his anger and inability to procure money for the Spartan war effort.<sup>24</sup> But in truth he is portrayed neither as a positive or negative ideal. Negatively, he acts hastily and out of anger--a motivation of which Xenophon heartily disapproves;<sup>25</sup> his panhellenistic rhetoric is largely bombast, though noble enough in sentiment;<sup>26</sup> and he cannot be credited with refusing barbarian money, for he obviously would have taken the money if Cyrus had offered it to him, and there is no evidence that Xenophon himself considered it shameful to take barbarian money.<sup>27</sup> But positively, it is unlikely that Xenophon blames Callicratidas for the failure to obtain money for the fleet. He, in fact, proved himself quite capable in this area of endeavour: he went from

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<sup>23</sup>Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 261; Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 79; Ronnet, "La figure de Callicratidas," 112.

<sup>24</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 11; Due, "Lysander in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 57; Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 82-3; Cartledge, *Crisis of Sparta*, 82.

<sup>25</sup>See especially *Hell.* 5.3.7. Moles' contention ("Xenophon and Callicratidas," 75) that Xenophon is not consistently negative toward anger (using *Hell.* 3.4.8 as an example) is not convincing.

<sup>26</sup>See Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 11, who points to the fact that Callicratidas quickly forgot his panhellenism when he captured Methymna and sold the Athenian garrison there as slaves. Laforse, "Xenophon, Callicratidas and Panhellenism," shows that panhellenism was usually little more than a rhetorical stance for the Greeks of this time, affecting state policy very little.

<sup>27</sup>Hermocrates, who is one of the few completely positive characters in the *Hellenica*, receives money quite freely from the Persian satrap Pharnabazus and this reception appears to be a mark of his resourcefulness (1.1.31).



Cyrus directly to Mytilene where he very successfully obtained funds from the citizens there; even more significantly Xenophon makes a point of recording that Callicratidas did in the end receive money from Cyrus (1.6.18). The important point of this incident is that Callicratidas outdid Lysander again and, by his abrupt, forceful manner, effectively annulled the subtle conspiracies of Lysander.

When Callicratidas left Cyrus, he sailed to Miletus (1.6.7). In spite of failing to procure money from Cyrus he evidently had already gained greater power upon the seas than his predecessor, who had refused to take up Callicratidas' challenge to hand over the ships at Miletus (1.6.2-3). From here he sent ships home to Sparta with a request for money (1.6.8). Callicratidas seems continually oriented toward home, in contrast to Lysander, whose attentions and interests always seem directed to the east. The change of headquarters from Lysander's more Persianized Ephesus to Miletus may also reflect this same orientation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Plutarch, *Lys.* 3.3, states that when Lysander first came to Ephesus he found it well-disposed to him personally and enthusiastic for the Spartan cause but also in a distressed state and in danger of "going barbarian" through Persian practices. H. Schaefer, "Alkibiades und Lysander in Ionien," *WJA* 4 (1949/50), 301-2 argues that Lysander made Ephesus his base in order to draw the city away from Persian influence. D. Lotze, *Lysander*, 15, on the contrary, argues that he went to Ephesus because he desired closer ties to the Persians, an opinion which would be much more consistent with Xenophon's narrative. See also P. A. Rahe, "Lysander and the Spartan Settlement" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1977), 28 and Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II.3.10*, 135. If in Xenophon's day Ephesus was well-known to be somewhat Persianized, Callicratidas' switching of headquarters to Miletus may very well have had the subtle point I am suggesting. The establishment of Agesilaus' base of operations in Ephesus is a different thing, since he advanced into this more Persian context in order to better move forward his war against the barbarian. Laforse, "Xenophon, Callicratidas and Panhellenism," 60, note 19, argues that Callicratidas moved to Miletus mainly to escape the partisans of Lysander. But while it is quite likely Lysander had a stronger following in Ephesus, Xenophon makes it clear that Callicratidas by no means escaped the partisans of Lysander in Miletus (1.6.12).



Callicratidas' main activity in Miletus seems to have been to obtain money from the Milesians. His speech to them (1.6.8-11) is remarkably similar in purpose and effect to his earlier speech to the Lacedaemonians under his command. The speech emphasizes the contrast between Callicratidas and Lysander. Callicratidas began it very like his earlier speech, with a declaration that he must obey the authorities at home (1.6.8), implying that Lysander had never been so concerned. He stated that the Milesians should take the lead among the allies in harming the enemy as quickly and severely as possible (ὅπως ἂν τάχιστα τε καὶ μάλιστα, 1.6.9). Lysander had been effective in harming the enemy, but always cautiously, never quickly. Callicratidas reported that Lysander had given the money that he had on hand back to Cyrus as superfluous, whereas Cyrus kept putting himself off when he came for money (1.6.10). Xenophon, I believe, presents this accusation against Lysander as true, another indication of Lysander covertly working against Callicratidas for his own personal advancement. Proietti also believes that this accusation is true and "shows the length to which some Spartans can be driven in their... 'rivalry for honour'."<sup>29</sup>

The response to this speech was almost identical to that of the former. "And when he said this, many got up, especially those who were accused of opposing him, and in fear proposed a public contribution of money and promised private contributions themselves" (1.6.12). Why,

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<sup>29</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 15.





though, did the Milesians fear? Some commentators assume that at least part of their fear was of the barbarian.<sup>30</sup> This, however, is unlikely. Certainly Callicratidas reminded his audience that they had suffered in the past from the barbarians (1.6.8). But the point he made in this regard is not that they should therefore fear the barbarian in the present, but that they should show him they have no need of him to wage war against the Athenians (1.6.11). Moreover, fear of the barbarian does not explain why those accused of opposing Callicratidas were especially afraid; these presumably were Lysander's partisans and therefore had the barbarian as their ally. It is far more likely that the Milesians feared repercussions from Sparta. Callicratidas spoke of the necessity of obeying the home authorities and of the ships that were imminent from Sparta with money. The threat then is the same as that of the first speech, that the home authorities would punish those who opposed the will of Callicratidas. In such a situation the partisans of Lysander should especially fear.<sup>31</sup> So again Callicratidas by direct confrontation overcame the opposition set up against him by Lysander.

In the battle for Methymna and its aftermath we continue to observe that Callicratidas was energetic, swift and blunt. As soon as he got the money from Mytilene and from Chios, he paid his soldiers only

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<sup>30</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 83, suggests only the Persian threat as the source of the Milesian fear. Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas," 78, suggests that the fear is caused by the Persian threat and because some of them were accused of opposing Callicratidas.

<sup>31</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 15-16.



enough for their immediate needs<sup>32</sup> and sailed to Methymna. We notice no reference whatever to Callicratidas setting the fleet in order or repairing and drying out the ships as with Lysander. When the Methymnians were not inclined to capitulate to him, Callicratidas simply took the city by storm (1.6.13). It may be that his haste was due to his need to raise money quickly,<sup>33</sup> but "Callicratidas would always have waged war vigorously."<sup>34</sup> We also notice his effectiveness in raising funds without the help of the Persians.<sup>35</sup> In the sack of Methymna, the soldiers seized all the money and Callicratidas gathered together all the captives and sold as slaves the Athenians among them (1.6.14-15). To Xenophon, plundering the enemy is the ideal method of raising funds.<sup>36</sup> Finally we see Callicratidas speaking high-minded sentiments which he only partially lived up to. Having gathered together all the captives, he pompously declared that while he was in charge, he would do everything

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<sup>32</sup>He paid them five drachmae each, which, if we assume the daily pay for Spartan sailors remained four obols a day (see *Hell.* 1.5.7), would be enough for about a week's wage. The word used of Callicratidas' payment here is ἐφοδιασάμενος, suggesting that it was money for the road, that is, for the immediate needs of the present expedition.

<sup>33</sup>So Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 16.

<sup>34</sup>Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas," 78.

<sup>35</sup>Laforse, "Xenophon, Callicratidas and Panhellenism, 60, sees this as one of his shining virtues according to Xenophon.

<sup>36</sup>Note especially the sentiments of Teleutias at *Hell.* 5.1.17. See Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 17, note 15 for other references.



in his power to ensure that not a single Greek would be enslaved. To be sure Callicratidas, in refusing to sell the Methymnans, went some distance in fulfilling his promise. If he had sold them, he would have pleased the allies (for they were insisting that “even the Methymnans be sold as slaves”), he would have gained more money for the war effort (which was clearly a serious concern for him), and he would have rid himself of the future threat of the rebellion of Methymna (since the leading men of the city--the ones he refused to enslave--were said to be “favourable to Athens” [Ἀττικίζοντες]). But in selling the Athenian garrison as slaves, he showed himself not wholly committed to either reconciling with Athens or keeping every Greek free.

Apparently buoyed by his victory at Methymna, Callicratidas made a shockingly bold boast.<sup>37</sup> “He said to Conon that he would stop him from fornicating with the sea.” In this Callicratidas claimed that he owned the sea as his wife. This statement should be compared with the θαλαττοκράτωρ boast of Lysander. “Callicratidas has now arrived at the position of regarding *himself* as θαλαττοκράτωρ.”<sup>38</sup> Now we understand why he denied the title to Lysander: not because such a claim should not be made but because he wanted to claim it for himself. Callicratidas’ statement was even bolder than Lysander’s, in fact, for though it seems

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<sup>37</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 11, writes, “He is given here quite simply the most startling image in the entire corpus of Xenophon.”

<sup>38</sup>Moles, “Xenophon and Callicratidas,” 79. See also Proietti, *Xenophon’s Sparta*, 18.





likely that Callicratidas had greater freedom on the seas than Lysander had, the former had not yet tested his maritime prowess in a sea battle. But it was in keeping with Callicratidas' more forthright and bombastic character to make a bolder statement than his rival. The important thing is that this statement juxtaposes Lysander and Callicratidas as rival claimants for the same honour.

At first, Callicratidas looked as though he might live up to his bold pronouncement. He spotted Conon setting sail and in the pursuit cut him off from his home base of Samos (1.6.15). Xenophon points out that Conon's fleet was sailing well since he had chosen the best rowers out of all his ships and put these into fewer ships (1.6.16; see 1.5.20). This fact points up the swiftness of Callicratidas' seamanship for, in spite of the sailing prowess of Conon's fleet, Callicratidas overtook it and destroyed thirty Athenian ships before Conon could escape into Mitylene with the rest (1.6.18-19). Diodorus' account of this battle brings out to a much greater degree the skill and energy of Conon.<sup>39</sup> He describes Conon's outstanding preparation of the fleet, his sage and detailed strategy, and that he was so far in front of the Peloponnesian fleet that

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<sup>39</sup>The discrepancies between the account of Xenophon and that of Diodorus have been the source of some controversy. It is generally held that Diodorus' account is historically inferior to Xenophon's. So C. J. Tuplin, "Military Engagements in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," in *Past Perspectives. Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing*, ed. I. S. Moxon, J. D. Smart and A. J. Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 62-65; Vivienne Gray, "The Value of Diodorus Siculus for the Years 411-386 BC," *Hermes* 115 (1987): 72-89, especially 84-5; and Donald Kagan, *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 335. P. Pédech, "Batailles navales dans les historiens Grecs," *REG* 82 (1969): 43-55, especially, 49-52, takes a more positive view of Diodorus. P. Krentz, "Xenophon and Diodorus on the Battle of Mytilene (406 BC)," *AHB* 1 (1987): 128-130, asserts that the two accounts, while differing greatly, are not necessarily contradictory.





he rowed leisurely (συχολαίως, 13.77.1-3). Xenophon throughout places the initiative and the upper hand with Callicratidas. In fact, Xenophon's account makes this battle the pinnacle of Callicratidas' mastery: he had overtaken and defeated the Athenian fleet, and now had his enemy hopelessly besieged; right at this point, moreover, he received money from Cyrus, with the obvious implication that he would now be able to supply his forces even in a long siege (1.6.18). Xenophon then reiterates the superior position of Callicratidas with a report on the status of Conon. He was besieged by land and sea, he had no way to get food though there were many mouths to feed in the city, and no hope remained for help from the Athenians because they were unaware of Conon's situation (1.6.19).

At this high point of his fortunes, Callicratidas suffered his first setback. An Athenian ship managed to escape from Mytilene to Athens, aided by the carelessness and disorganization of the Spartans (1.6.19-22). This escape is significant on a number of levels. Militarily, it roused the Athenians to vigorous action which led to the defeat of the Spartan fleet. It also provides a commentary on the effectiveness of Callicratidas' leadership. So far his efforts had been met with unrelenting success, but when patient attention was needed, he quite failed. The contrast with Lysander is obvious. This failure, in fact, foreshadows his ultimate failure at Arginusae, which also came about from the lack of patience. The striking parallels between this event and the battle of Aegospotami indicate another level of significance. In the



battle of Aegospotami, Lysander played the part of the clever commander, which Conon played at Mytilene. He lay low for four days, screening his activities from the enemy, until finally on the fifth day he sailed out while the enemy was inattentive, which resulted in victory (2.1.22-28). The point is that in the ongoing competition between the two, Lysander will win, for his intelligence and care wins out over the rash bravado of Callicratidas, effective though it was for a time. Thus that which is foreshadowed at Mytilene becomes a reality when Callicratidas loses his life and Lysander is restored to command of the Spartan fleet in Asia (2.1.6-7).

Callicratidas' bold approach brought him one more success. When Diomedon arrived to help Conon, the Spartan admiral attacked him suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) and captured ten of his twelve ships (1.6.23). But then his fortune changed. Hearing that the Athenians were in Samos, Callicratidas sailed out to meet the enemy (1.6.26). But when he wanted to set sail in the middle of the night so as to fall upon the enemy as suddenly as possible (ὥς ἐξαπναιῶς), a storm prevented him (1.6.28). A storm at Cyzicus had helped Alcibiades win a sea battle, and an unexpected snowfall would contribute significantly to the success of Thrasybulus at Phyle. Both of these meteorological phenomena seem to indicate the favour of heaven or perhaps the positive working of fate.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Xenophon seems somewhat imprecise on his conception of the divine in the *Hellenica*. See Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 255, note 22 and Jean-Claude Riedinger, *Études sur les Helléniques: Xénophon et l'histoire* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1991), 250, note 4.



But heaven or fate was not with Callicratidas and so the storm prevented his sudden onset. Since Callicratidas was always successful when he attacked swiftly, Xenophon seems to suggest that if he had not been prevented by the storm, Callicratidas, and not Lysander, would have destroyed the Athenians and been the one who brought the great war to an end. This adds an important caveat into the narrative, for without this reference to the divine we might conclude that Callicratidas is ultimately unsuccessful in his generalship because boldness and alacrity are of only limited effectiveness. This reference adds an element of uncertainty into the picture: one can evaluate human affairs according to the character and actions of human figures, but ultimately one's judgement is limited by the inscrutability of divine activity. Xenophon stresses this same idea in his characterization of Epaminondas, whose flawless conduct of military affairs should have led him to victory but did not (7.5.8).<sup>41</sup> Callicratidas' experience, therefore, foreshadows Xenophon's conclusion that the divine often thwarts human expectations (7.5.26-27).

When the rain let up at the break of day, both sides marshalled their forces, the Athenians in a much more complex layered arrangement (because they wanted to prevent the *diekplous*), and the Spartans in a single line (because they wanted to effect both the *diekplous* and the *periplous*; 1.6.29-31). Modern commentators discuss the details of these

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<sup>41</sup>See below, pp. 319-20.





arrangements, the nature of their outworkings in the battle itself and the relative virtues of Xenophon's and Diodorus' accounts,<sup>42</sup> but Xenophon's interests are different. In Xenophon, "the [Athenian] generals gain stature by devising a clever defense to overcome their ships' poor quality."<sup>43</sup> But for our present purposes it is more significant that the deployment of Callicratidas was extremely simple in comparison to that of the Athenians and was for aggressive offense only. Before the battle began, Callicratidas' pilot told his superior that it would be good for them to sail away, for the Athenians greatly outnumbered them. Callicratidas refused to listen. It is a consistent characteristic of Callicratidas to run roughshod over the concerns of his underlings.<sup>44</sup> He proudly responded that Sparta would be no worse off with him dead, but to flee was shameful (1.6.32). This again contrasts hasty Callicratidas with patient Lysander, who refused to take up Alcibiades' challenge at Ephesus "because he had far fewer ships" (1.5.15).

The description of Callicratidas' death is significant for understanding Xenophon's characterization of the man. That the battle

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<sup>42</sup>See Tuplin, "Military Engagements," 58-59; Kagan, *Fall of the Athenian Empire*, 338-53; Gray, "Value of Diodorus," 85-87; Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II*.3.10, 154-6.

<sup>43</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika I-II*.3.10, 155.

<sup>44</sup>When he realized the Spartans under his command were insubordinate, he did not talk to them personally or individually to win them over, but threatened them as a group (1.6..5). Similarly with the Milesian Greeks. (1.6.8-11). He also refused the request of the allies to enslave the Methymnian citizens (1.6.14). He is somewhat like Alcibiades in his unconcern to be collegial and friendly with those under him, though Xenophon does not appear to emphasize this characteristic quite as much in his portrayal of Callicratidas.



lasted a long time did not bode well for Callicratidas, since his only previous setback (at Mytilene) was due to his inattention arising from four days of inactivity. He either won quickly, it seems, or not at all. Also, his daring is juxtaposed with his destruction, for as he was boldly ramming an enemy ship, he fell overboard and simply, suddenly disappeared (1.6.33). It is biting irony that the sea should now overcome the one who claimed such mastery over the sea.<sup>45</sup> The unusual description that Callicratidas “disappeared” (ἡφανίσθη) has its significance as well. “As a man excessively concerned with his own repute, he achieves not glory but its reverse: disappearance.”<sup>46</sup> But Callicratidas’ failure was not just personal, for Xenophon makes a close connection between his death and the Spartan defeat. As soon as he disappeared, his side (the Spartan right) was defeated, which caused a general rout (1.6.31). So in spite of Callicratidas’ declaration, his death did bring about significant loss to the Spartan cause. The point of the whole episode then is that Callicratidas’ approach was in the end a

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<sup>45</sup>Diodorus treats the death of Callicratidas quite differently from Xenophon. In Diodorus, who is much more inclined than Xenophon to portray Callicratidas (and other leaders) with a simple emphasis on his (or their) courage and virtue, Callicratidas’ final statement is much less ambiguously patriotic: “If I die in the battle, it will make Sparta no less glorious” (φασὶ τὸν Καλλικρατίδαν εἶπειν, ὅτι τελευτήσας κατὰ τὴν μάχην οὐδὲν ἄδοξοτέραν ποιήσει τὴν Σπάρτην; 13.97.5). He takes care that if he dies, his men should not be leaderless (as they were in Xenophon), by appointing Clearchus as his successor as navarch (13.98.1). The description of his death is so gloriously rehearsed, and in such detail, that it seems almost a parody in comparison with Xenophon. Tuplin, “Military Engagements,” 58, prefers Xenophon’s account for historical accuracy, since Diodorus’ is more “conventional”. But Xenophon’s account, though not conventional, is highly tendentious in the point that it makes about Callicratidas and the end of his quest for glory.

<sup>46</sup>Moles, “Xenophon and Callicratidas,” 82.



failure. For a time Callicratidas swept away all of the subtle contrivances of Lysander and it looked like his boldness would win the day. In fact if it had not been for the intervention of fate in the form of a storm, he may well have won the day. But in the end he failed because of his lack of Lysandran circumspection, and his failure caused harm to the interests of his city and allowed the chronic turmoil in Greek affairs to continue. The spotlight next turns back to Lysander, who now especially appears to possess what it takes to accomplish what his rival could not.

After the battle of Arginusae, the Chians and other Spartan allies in Asia sent an embassy to request that Lysander be sent out to take charge of the navy (2.1.6). The Spartans responded positively, but Xenophon's account suggests sinister undercurrents in the request. First, he reports that Lysander was well thought of by the allies "because of his earlier navarchy when he was also victorious in the sea battle at Notium." The presence of the word "also" (καί) rouses suspicion. It indicates that there was another reason, besides the victorious sea battle, that caused the allies to be favourably disposed to Lysander.<sup>47</sup> That reason was most likely related to the personal allegiances that Lysander fostered during his earlier stint as navarch, which caused such

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<sup>47</sup>Due, "Lysander in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 57, fails to take into account the significance of the καί and assumes that the sole reason for the allies' request is the military prowess of Lysander.





grief for Callicratidas.<sup>48</sup> Plutarch (*Lys.* 5.3-5) tells us that Lysander, acting subversively and unjustly, promised his Asian partisans great rewards when the Athenians were defeated; Xenophon much more subtly implies something similar. As well, Xenophon tells us that Cyrus also sent messengers saying the same things as the allies' ambassadors (2.1.7). This reminds us that there was a personal bond between Lysander and the Persian prince that was not strictly in Sparta's best interest, as Callicratidas had discovered.

In response to the request from Asia, the Spartans sent Lysander as secretary or vice-admiral (ἐπιστολεύς), with Aracus as titular admiral, since the law did not allow the same person to be admiral twice. It is clear, however, that though the Spartans were following the letter of the law, they were not following the spirit of it, for Xenophon says, "Nevertheless [that is, in spite of the law], they handed the ships over to Lysander (2.1.7)."<sup>49</sup> This cannot be anything but an ominous development in Xenophon's mind.

When he arrived in Ephesus, Lysander again asked Cyrus for money. The situation now was reversed from the first time Lysander had

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<sup>48</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 21-22, recognizes the significance of the "also" in the statement of allies, but considers the additional reason to be that Lysander was adept at getting money for the Spartan fleet from Cyrus, relieving the financial burden of the allies. Proietti admits, however, that on this understanding, it is surprising that Cyrus also was eager to have Lysander come.

<sup>49</sup>The whole sentence is, οὐ γὰρ νόμος αὐτοῖς δις τὸν αὐτὸν ναυαρχεῖν· τὰς μέντοι ναῦς παρέδωσαν Λυσάνδρῳ.





requested money. Then, Cyrus had boasted how much money he had available and how committed to the Spartan cause he truly was, yet showed reluctance to be generous with Lysander. Now he complained that he had no money, yet gave Lysander some (2.1.11). This indicates how close their relationship had become since their initial meeting. The picture of Cyrus' closeness to Lysander is further enhanced when Cyrus was summoned by his father (2.1.13). Before he left Cyrus handed over to Lysander all the tribute money from the cities which belonged to him personally, and gave him the rest of his money as well. It is clear from Xenophon's narrative just how free with Lysander Cyrus truly was: "And Lysander, when Cyrus had handed over to him *all his possessions* (πάντα τὰ αὐτοῦ)..." (2.1.15). Cyrus expressed the reason for his generosity: "And reminding (him) how friendly he was toward the city of the Lacedaemonians and to Lysander personally, he went up to his father." We may be excused, however, for expressing some doubt about the Persian's friendliness toward the Spartan state in general.<sup>50</sup>

The close relationship between Cyrus, the oriental despot, and Lysander, the Spartan general, is important for Xenophon's portrait of the latter. Cyrus' friendship and generosity to Lysander created a strong link of reciprocal favour. When Cyrus challenged his brother for the kingship, he called upon the Spartans to reciprocate the kindness that he had shown them in their war against Athens (3.1.1). This kindness

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<sup>50</sup>See Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 22.



was especially received through Lysander.<sup>51</sup> The assistance sent to Cyrus was ultimately harmful to the Spartan cause since it resulted in the alienation of the Persian king (see especially 3.5.1-2 and 4.2.1). Lysander, who cannot or will not be friendly with fellow-Spartans (for example, Callicratidas) for the good of the state, develops a close relationship with Cyrus to the ultimate detriment of the state.

In the events surrounding the battle of Aegospotami, Xenophon portrays Lysander mainly as an effective, aggressive, but above all patient and intelligent general. He took Cedraea, an Athenian ally (2.1.15), then sailed to the Hellespont to gain control of the ships coming through from the Black Sea and to deal with the cities which had revolted from the Spartans (2.1.17). He took Lampsacus by storm and received a rich reward for his conquest (2.1.18-19). Evidently Lysander had again planned his moves well. Yet he was clearly in no hurry to confront the Athenian fleet. In fact, it was the Athenians who were spoiling for a sea battle: as they were damaging the king's interests they were also preparing for a battle at sea (2.1.16); when the Spartans went to the Hellespont, they went after them (2.1.17, 20); and when they heard that the enemy had taken Lampsacus, they immediately (εὐθύς) set sail for Sestos and then immediately (εὐθύς) went to Aegospotami which was directly across from Lampsacus (2.1.20-21). When the forces were thus

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<sup>51</sup>Cawkwell, *History of His Times*, 99, points out that a contemporary source (Andocides 3.29) puts the Persian generosity to Sparta at five thousand talents. At the beginning of the Sparta-Persia alliance the Persians were stingy, but "the intimacy of Lysander and Cyrus changed all that."



stationed opposite, it was the Athenians who deployed their forces each day so as to provoke a battle.<sup>52</sup> Lysander on the other hand bided his time, waiting for the right opportunity.

Xenophon does not report how many ships Lysander had, though he states earlier that the Athenians had 180 (2.1.20). The omission, especially glaring in light of Cyrus' advice at 2.1.14 that Lysander should not fight the Athenians unless he had a clear numerical advantage, suggests that it was not the numerical but the strategic superiority of Lysander which won the day.<sup>53</sup> Each morning Lysander carefully readied his men for battle, but gave strict orders that no one should move from their assigned position or set sail (2.1.22). When the Athenians sailed back to their anchorage, Lysander sent his swiftest ships to observe the movements of the enemy. The purpose of this spying may have been not just to look for an opportunity to exploit but also to ensure that the Spartans were not taken off guard by an Athenian ruse, for Lysander did not to allow his men to disembark until the spy ships arrived back in port (2.1.23). This procedure went on for four days (2.1.24). On the fifth day, Lysander waited until the Athenians had disembarked and were scattered across the Chersonesus carelessly searching for food (2.1.27), then commanded the whole fleet to sail across as quickly as possible.

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<sup>52</sup>Xenophon's account, therefore, is fully consistent with Barry Strauss' assertion ("Aegospotami Reexamined," *AJP* 104 [1983]: 24-35, especially 28) that the Athenians stayed on at the very unsuitable beach at Aegospotami because they "were desperate for a quick victory."

<sup>53</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 27-8.





They sailed to an extraordinary victory (2.1.28-29).<sup>54</sup> Lysander's intelligence and disciplined patience achieved the devastation of the entire Athenian fleet.<sup>55</sup> Diodorus' account places much less emphasis on the skill of Lysander.<sup>56</sup> The Athenian commanding general Philocles sailed out ahead of the rest of the fleet with thirty ships, commanding the others to follow (13.106.1). Lysander, having gotten information from deserters, launched the whole Spartan fleet, routed Philocles and fell upon the rest of the Athenian ships before they were fully manned. The Spartan victory, therefore, was based on Lysander obtaining chance information rather than on his skill, patience, and intelligence as in

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<sup>54</sup>The only bright spot for the Athenians was Conon, who managed a very daring and successful raid against Lysander in the midst of the overwhelming defeat. Conon continued in character here as a very resourceful general who managed to do his best in less than favourable conditions (see 1.5.20; 1.6.16-22). His escape--and the manner in which he escaped--also suggests a future hope for Athens, which Conon went a fair way to fulfill when he did return (4.3.11-12; 4.8.1-10).

<sup>55</sup>I disagree with Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*," 262, that Xenophon's narrative "gives the impression that the decisive factor was Athenian incompetence." See Due, "Lysander in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 57-58. Nepos, *Lys.* 1, is vehement that it was not Lysander's skill, but Athenian incompetence and disobedience that delivered the victory at Aegospotami, but the simple animosity of Nepos is far from the attitude of Xenophon.

<sup>56</sup>There is no consensus as to which of the the two accounts is historically superior. C. Ehrhardt, "Xenophon and Diodorus on Aegospotami," *Phoenix* 24 (1970): 225-8, Bommelaer, *Lysandre de Sparte*, 101-15, and Kagan, *Fall of the Athenian Empire*, 391, prefer Diodorus. Gray, "Value of Diodorus Siculus," 79, and Tuplin, "Military Engagements," 59-60, defend Xenophon. Barry Strauss, "Aegospotami Reexamined," 27, and "A Note on the Topography and Tactics of the Battle of Aegospotami," *AJP* 108 (1987): 741-5, reserves judgement, but on the whole seems to prefer Xenophon.



Xenophon.<sup>57</sup>

Lysander's actions in the aftermath of the battle are questionable. The allies decided that all the Athenian captives be killed except Adimantus who had spoken against the proposal (which had been passed in the Athenian assembly) that any captives in the sea battle have their hands cut off. Lysander began the slaughter, fittingly, with Philocles, who had ordered the men of two captured ships thrown overboard (2.1.32). Lysander's action here may have been just: the allies raised many, serious accusations against the Athenians; Adimantus was justly let off; the slaughter of Philocles suggests that Lysander was simply acting according to the principle of *lex talionis*.<sup>58</sup> Yet Lysander's participation in the slaughter was harsh and direct. "[Xenophon] makes clear that Lysander initiated the discussion on the fate of the prisoners and that he personally cross-examined and put to death one of the Athenian generals."<sup>59</sup> Finally, Xenophon appears to emphasize the harshness of the action by leaving the single word description of the slaughter of Philocles (ἀπέσφαξεν) as the last in the episode: "Xenophon intended to shock the reader with the brutal force of the word. It stands

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<sup>57</sup>Strauss, "Aegospotami Reexamined," 24, states that in Xenophon, Sparta's victory results from "Lysander's judicious use of scout ships and the strict discipline imposed on his fleet," while in Diodorus "Lysander merely relies on deserters for information."

<sup>58</sup>Lysander designates his action ἄξιος.

<sup>59</sup>Westlake, "Individuals in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 262.



abrupt and alone at the end of the sentence.”<sup>60</sup>

We are left with two questions at the end of this account. First, we wonder if this is the end of the “outrages” or lawless acts of Greek against Greek.<sup>61</sup> Will Lysander’s act of punishment of the guilty Athenians put an end to illegal acts, or will it prove to be just one more in a series? Second, we wonder if the conqueror at Aegospotami, the one who has now brought the great war to an end, will be able to bring about a just order in Hellas. The ongoing narrative suggests that the answer is No.

Lysander did not relax his exertions after the battle of Aegospotami but followed them up with strategic planning energetically executed. Byzantium and Chalcedon capitulated to him (2.2.1). He allowed safe passage to the Athenian guards and any other Athenian he happened to come across, but only if they were going to Athens, for he calculated that the greater the number of people who were gathered in Athens, the sooner would arise a deficiency of food (2.2.2). Lysander, true to form, was not planning to boldly storm the city of Athens with a frontal assault, but rather patiently to reduce them by starvation. With Lysander’s further exertions all of Greece went over to the Spartans except the Samians (2.2.6). Lysander refrained from storming Samos,

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<sup>60</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon’s Sparta*, 31.

<sup>61</sup>Xenophon characterizes the sins of the Athenians as παράνομα, using παρενενομήκεσαν in 2.1.31 and παρανομεῖν in 2.1.32.



but waited until after the fall of Athens itself, when the Samians really had no choice but to surrender (2.3.6-7). The reluctance of the Samians even then to capitulate proved his wisdom in waiting. Finally he sailed to Athens and besieged it by sea (2.2.9).

Yet throughout Xenophon's report of the successes of Lysander there is a sinister note. The suggestion is strong that Athenian control was not being replaced by freedom but by the dominance of Sparta. When Lysander took control of Byzantium and Chalcedon he left Sthenelaus as the Spartan harmost (2.2.2). Since the Athenians were no longer a threat, one might well wonder why this was necessary.<sup>62</sup> When Eteonicus was sent to the coast of Thrace, "he transferred everything there over to the Lacedaemonians" (2.2.5). Why did he not transfer affairs over to the Greek inhabitants of these cities? Again, when Lysander finally captured Samos, he handed the city over to the former citizens (2.3.7)<sup>63</sup> but at the same time set up one of his infamous decarchies as a guard for the city. In light of his practice elsewhere, it is likely too that when Lysander is said to have "settled matters" at Lampsacus (2.2.1, κατεστήσατο) and on Lesbos (2.2.5, κατεσκευάσατο) Xenophon implies he set up some sort of Spartan system of control in

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<sup>62</sup>Kagan, *Fall of the Athenian Empire*, 397, referring to the Spartan use of harmosts and garrisons, says, "After the battle of Aegospotami they could no longer be justified in the same way; yet Lysander kept them in place where he found them and installed them where they had not been before."

<sup>63</sup>Probably those exiled by the Demos in 412 as recorded by Thucydides 8.21 (Underhill, *A Commentary on the Hellenica of Xenophon*, 53).





these places. Referring to Lysander's treatment of the former Athenian allies, Charles Hamilton writes, "he chose neither to set them free nor to join them to the Peloponnesian League as member states, but rather to create a new class of client-states, tied to Sparta by a system of harmosts, and governed by narrow oligarchies devoted to himself."<sup>64</sup>

It must be admitted that as Lysander was sailing to Athens and getting closer to home there is no mention of placing harmosts or decarchies in the cities. He gave Aegina back to the Aeginetans, Melos back to the Melians and other cities back to their people "as many as had been deprived of them" (2.2.9). Does this show that Lysander really did not have imperial ambitions? Not necessarily. Xenophon likely portrays Lysander as setting up an imperial system in areas where he could get away with it, perhaps as the Spartan commander Pausanias had tried to practice his eastern despotism many years before in the areas further away from Greece and in conjunction with the power of Persia (Thuc. 1.94-95, 128-34). Fulfilling (or at least appearing to fulfill) the ideal of freedom for the Greeks close to home would have earned him political credit as well. "Since [these actions] were sure to do him good politically, he did not hesitate to carry them out."<sup>65</sup>

The account of the surrender of Athens also suggests self-aggrandizing motives on Lysander's part. After initial Athenian

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<sup>64</sup>Charles Hamilton, "Spartan Politics and Policies, 405-401 B.C.," *AJP* 91 (1970), 298.

<sup>65</sup>Kagan, *Fall of the Athenian Empire*, 398.



negotiations with Sparta through King Agis fell through (2.2.11-13), Theramenes had himself sent to Lysander to negotiate. This implied something underhanded, since Agis had already told the Athenians that they had to negotiate with the authorities at home (2.2.12). When Theramenes returned home, he reported that Lysander had said that he had no authority to negotiate but that the ephors had such authority (2.2.17).<sup>66</sup> This seems to be an important theme with Xenophon, for when the Athenians then sent an embassy to the Spartan ephors, Lysander also sent the Athenian exile Aristoteles with some Spartans to say that he had told Theramenes that they (the ephors) had authority in matters of war and peace (2.2.18). So Lysander is twice reported by others to have said that the ephors were in authority. Agis, on the other hand, had simply ordered them to go to Sparta since he himself had no authority (2.2.12). There seems to be a contrast between Agis who actually says, and Lysander who is only said by others to have said, that the ephors were in charge.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, each of the delegations to Sparta (the Athenian and the Spartan) contained at least one leading person who was a partisan of Lysander (Theramenes and Aristoteles),

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<sup>66</sup> "Lysander's role in these negotiations was much greater than appears at first glance. The fact that Theramenes chose to contact him demands explanation, for the Athenians had known at least since their first embassy to Sparta that only the ephors possessed authority to conduct foreign affairs." Charles D. Hamilton, *Sparta's Bitter Victories. Politics and Diplomacy in the Corinthian War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), 49.

<sup>67</sup> Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 38, calls Lysander's statement as reported by Theramenes "a rather pretentious act of humility" since he imitated King Agis' words; it makes sense that a king would deny his own authority, but not that a navarch (an unofficial one, no less) would.



who was ready to vouch for Lysander's expressed submission to the ephors. The subtle impression of the narrative is that Lysander was working his own personal schemes and at the same time making sure that those in authority at home would not suspect it.

The goal of Lysander's scheming becomes apparent in the aftermath of the negotiations at Sparta. The Athenians in desperation agreed to the peace even though it involved the destruction of the long walls and those around the Piraeus (2.2.20-22). It was Lysander's accomplice Theramenes who delivered the decisive speech in the Athenian assembly. Lysander then sailed in and oversaw the destruction of the walls. One might have expected that Agis, who was a king and who for so long had stood guard outside those walls, would have had the honour of overseeing the walls' destruction.<sup>68</sup> Instead, the opportunistic Lysander received the glory for that act by which it was thought freedom would come to the Greeks (2.2.23). There is no overt tension between Agis and Lysander--they may well have been political allies.<sup>69</sup> Yet Lysander outmanoeuvred Agis, even if Agis was not in active competition

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<sup>68</sup>Agis was still at Athens at this point, for his dissolution of the land forces is not reported until 2.3.3.

<sup>69</sup>This is all the more likely in that Lysander and Pausanias, the other Spartan king, were in serious conflict (as we shall see), since competing political factions at Sparta naturally coalesced around the two kings. See Hamilton, *Sparta's Bitter Victories*, 75. Elements from other ancient sources suggest that Agis and Lysander were political allies: Plutarch records that before the battle of Aegospotami, Lysander took a trip across to Athens whose only purpose seemed to be to greet Agis, who himself came down to the coast from Decelea to meet Lysander (*Lys.* 9.3); Pausanias records that after Aegospotami, Agis and Lysander jointly proposed the destruction of Athens "themselves and not according to the general will of the Spartans" (3.8.6).





with him, in the quest for the glory of presiding at the destruction of the Athenian walls.<sup>70</sup>

Xenophon gives the impression that Lysander was also working for personal control in Athens. Diodorus reports that Lysander forced a government of thirty upon the Athenians (14.3.5-6), yet according to Xenophon the Athenian Demos itself chose the Thirty, who were to write up the ancestral laws by which they should govern (2.3.2,11). Xenophon seems to assume that the choosing of the Thirty was a strictly internal affair. But perhaps things are not that straightforward. Aristoteles and Theramenes, both of whom were working in concert with Lysander, were chosen as members of the Thirty (2.3.2). Moreover, when the Thirty felt the need of the support of a Spartan garrison, they appealed to Lysander-through Aristoteles no less (2.3.13).<sup>71</sup> Lysander, still apparently influential with the ephors, was able to fulfill their request, and Callibius was sent as harmost with a garrison. Since Lysander was in the habit of setting up narrow oligarchies led by men loyal to himself in the cities under his control and garrisoning them with soldiers commanded by a harmost, it is hard not to suspect that this was his

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<sup>70</sup>Note too that Lysander had earlier supplanted Agis as the one to whom the Athenians went when they wanted to talk peace.

<sup>71</sup>"While there is considerable ambiguity here concerning Lysander's interest in what is good for Sparta simply, there is much less ambiguity concerning Lysander's desire to establish his own friends or "clients" in power at Athens." Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 85.



plan all along.<sup>72</sup> Here again Xenophon skillfully allows his narrative to suggest that Lysander was working cleverly and quietly to set up a regime loyal to himself in Athens.

The impression of the personal ambition of Lysander for Athens is reinforced by later events. After the Thirty had established themselves in Eleusis and the Ten ruled in the city, both groups of oligarchs sent to Lysander for help. He, again apparently manipulating the political apparatus of the home government,<sup>73</sup> got himself appointed as *harmost* on land and his brother Libys as *navarch* by sea (2.4.28). This, however, roused the envy of King Pausanias. The king was worried that if Lysander were successful he would both win esteem and make Athens his own (2.4.29). Now Xenophon nowhere in his own voice says that Lysander was working to make Athens his own, but when the suggestion is made through Pausanias' character, we feel immediately that this is the case, especially in light of Lysander's past intrigues in Asia and Athens. This idea of making Athens one's own is reiterated a few lines later: in order to thwart Lysander's ambitions, Pausanias marched to Athens with an army including all the allies except the Boeotians and Corinthians, "because they perceived that the Lacedaemonians wanted to

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<sup>72</sup>Due, "Lysander in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," 59, suggests that by framing his report of the setting up of the Thirty with the name Lysander, Xenophon implies that he is behind the appointment of the Thirty.

<sup>73</sup>The verb used to describe Lysander's implementation of the Athenian oligarchs' request is *συμπράσσω*, the same as at 2.3.13.



make Athens their own and faithful to them" (2.4.30).<sup>74</sup> I suggest that here too Xenophon means to air a sentiment which he considered true, for his record shows the Spartan state actively supporting the tyrannic rule of the Thirty<sup>75</sup> in return for the quite abject devotion of that group.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, to make Athens "friendly" was clearly the goal of the two ephors who accompanied the army of Pausanias, and most likely of Pausanias himself: after winning a battle against the Piraeans, the king created a split among the oligarchs and told the faction loyal to him to come to him and the ephors and say that they wished to make peace with the men of Piraeus so that both together might be friendly to the Spartans (2.4.35); and the ephors heard this gladly (2.4.36). The Spartans, therefore, were trying to gain imperial control of Athens and it was at this time an open question if she was successful, whether she would gain it as the personal (that is, tyrannic) possession of the Spartan commander Lysander, or as the corporate possession of Sparta

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<sup>74</sup>ὅτι ἐγίγνωσκον Λακεδαιμονίους βουλομένους τὴν τῶν Ἀθηναίων χώραν οἰκείαν καὶ πιστὴν ποιήσασθαι. The word οἰκείαν here would be the "public" equivalent to ἰδίας (in 2.4.29) which was used to refer to Lysander as an individual.

<sup>75</sup>Tuplin, *The Failings of Empire*, 45, speaks of the "uncontradicted view of the Corinthians and Boeotians."

<sup>76</sup>Note the strong philo-Laconism of the speeches of both Critias (2.3.25, 35) and Theramenes (2.3.41).





as an imperial power.<sup>77</sup>

Xenophon alone of the ancient sources makes Pausanias' jealousy of Lysander the exclusive motivation for his expedition to Athens.<sup>78</sup> In this we detect an important theme in the portrayal of Lysander. I previously noted the sharp rivalry between Lysander and Callicratidas, as well as the implicit contest between Lysander and Agis. Lysander's clash with Pausanias continues this motif. Up to this point, Lysander has been victorious in these contests, but with Pausanias a reversal occurs. Lysander has gained an inordinate measure of honour for his victories and seems likely to win great power as well if his intrigues in Athens turn out successfully. Just before Pausanias comes onto the scene, Xenophon reports that the oligarchs at Athens had great confidence in Lysander (2.4.29). This statement raises the question as to whether Lysander will in fact live up to this high expectation. The answer turns out to be No. The first indication of Pausanias' ascendancy over

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<sup>77</sup>In *Vect.* 1.1, Xenophon says that it has always been his view that the sort of leaders a city had would determine the nature of its polity (Ἐγὼ μὲν τοῦτο αἰεὶ ποτε νομίζω, ὅποιοί τινες ἂν οἱ προστάται ᾤσι, τοιαύτας καὶ τὰς πολιτείας γίγνεσθαι). Perhaps this longstanding opinion is being reflected here with Lysander personally embodying the imperial ambitions of his city.

<sup>78</sup>Lysias implies that Pausanias was simply going out to help the Thirty but then switched allegiance to the Piraeans when he learned how much injustice they had suffered (18.10-12). *Ath pol.* 38.4, gives the impression that Pausanias came to effect a peace that was already in process of negotiation. According to Diodorus, Pausanias was both jealous and wanted to save Sparta's reputation which was being dragged through the mud by the actions of the Thirty (14.33.6). Pausanias reports that Pausanias went to Athens in order to establish the government of the Thirty, but after defeating the Piraeans withdrew so as not to disgrace the Spartans by increasing the power of the oligarchs (3.5.1). Plutarch makes jealousy the only motivation for Pausanias' expedition but claims that that jealousy was not just Pausanias' but Agis' as well (21.3).





Lysander comes at 2.4.30: Pausanias the king held the right wing, the place of highest honour, while Lysander, the mere commander, had to settle for the left wing. This military ascendancy of the king is reinforced by Xenophon's narrative of the subsequent events, in which Pausanias is in command and Lysander is nowhere mentioned (2.4.31-34).

Pausanias outmanoeuvred Lysander in the political realm as well. Having won a significant military victory over the democrats, Pausanias secretly sent them a message telling them to send an embassy to himself and the ephors present, and instructed them what to say. He also managed to create a split in the oligarchic party, convincing his partisans to state that it was not necessary for them to continue in conflict with those who held the Piraeus (2.4.35). The other party was undoubtedly that of Lysander. It is significant that Pausanias' partisans among the oligarchs were eventually sent to Sparta as ἰδιῶται (2.4.36), whereas Lysander's went as οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ κοινοῦ (2.4.37). This reinforces the impression that Lysander dominated the leadership of the oligarchs. Xenophon then reports, tellingly, that the two ephors present agreed with the opinion of Pausanias "rather than that of Lysander" (2.4.36). Pausanias had previously convinced three of the five ephors to sanction his expedition to Athens (2.4.29). In this he seemed to have undermined Lysander's support with the ephors, since Lysander must have gotten the



approval of at least three ephors for his own expedition (2.4.28).<sup>79</sup> Now in Athens, Pausanias clearly outmanoeuvred Lysander with respect to the ephors who accompanied the army. Lysander did not give up the struggle yet, however, for when a delegation made up of the democrats and Pausanias' oligarchs was sent to Sparta to negotiate a peace deal, the other oligarchic party sent a delegation as well, saying that they would hand over themselves and their fortifications to the Spartans to do with as they pleased. They also stated that they thought it right that if the democrats were indeed friendly to the Spartans, they would hand over Munychia and the Piraeus (2.4.37). In the end, however, Pausanias won the political struggle at home, for the government sent out fifteen men σὺν Πανσανίᾳ to reconcile affairs as well as they could (2.4.38).

The overall result, however, was harmful to Spartan interests, since the personal tensions between Pausanias and Lysander led to the establishment in Athens of a democratic government which was not truly friendly to Sparta. To see this we need only consider Thrasybulus' victory speech (2.4.40-2). Xenophon emphasizes the failure of Spartan policy by noting that the conditions of the peace were that both sides were to be friendly to Sparta (2.4.35,37). When we read Thrasybulus' mordant criticism of Spartan perfidy (2.4.41) we are struck by how badly Spartan policy really did go astray because of the unrestrained struggle for honour and power between Lysander and Pausanias.

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<sup>79</sup>Elections to the ephorate may well have intervened between Lysander's and Pausanias' expeditions. Hamilton, *Sparta's Bitter Victories*, 79.



It is often thought that Pausanias is an essentially negative character in the *Hellenica*.<sup>80</sup> In fact there are both pros and cons in his portrayal. Negatively, he was motivated by jealousy (2.4.29) and once acted out of anger (2.4.32). Positively, he was an effective general, fostered peace and reconciliation, and ultimately worked against the despotic oligarchs whom Lysander had consistently supported. The real concern of Xenophon's portrayal is not narrowly "moral" but political; it mainly has to do with Pausanias' rivalry with Lysander and how this rivalry worked to the detriment of Sparta. Lysander in his quest for personal glory and power supported the excesses of the Athenian oligarchs, which ultimately could have done nothing but harm to Spartan reputation and position in Greece. Pausanias, who opposed Lysander and his schemes, allowing jealousy to control his actions, put in place an essentially anti-Spartan government. In the end, the Spartans themselves recognized that the Athenian settlement was detrimental to their interests, for they condemned Pausanias to death, because "when he had the Athenian Demos in his grasp, he let them go" (3.5.25).

Lysander's struggle with Spartan royalty extended to his association with Agesilaus, though the relationship between these two

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<sup>80</sup>Phillip Harding, "King Pausanias and the Restoration of Democracy at Athens," *Hermes*, 116 (1988): 186-93; Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 45-6; Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 149. Harding goes so far as to characterize Pausanias' entrance on the scene in Xenophon as "Enter the villain"! (p. 189). He seems led astray by his opinion that Xenophon is a doctrinaire moderate oligarch and therefore disliked the democratic settlement of Athens which Pausanias made possible.





started positively. After the death of Agis, a new king had to be chosen (3.3.1). Leotychides, the son of Agis, and Agesilaus, Agis' brother, were the two contenders for the vacancy. The question hinged on the legitimacy of Leotychides as the son of Agis. Agesilaus claimed that Agis himself did not acknowledge Leotychides as his child, but Leotychides responded that his mother, who would have much better knowledge than his father about such things, claimed the contrary. Agesilaus then called upon Poseidon and time as more truthful witnesses: Poseidon, by an earthquake, drove Agis from his wife's bedroom, and in the tenth month after this Leotychides was born (3.3.2).

It is not immediately apparent who, in Xenophon's mind, had the better argument. On the one hand, Xenophon probably agrees with Leotychides that the mother has a better perspective than the father on such matters as childbirth and paternity.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, it is likely that the reference to the earthquake as a supernatural manifestation carries some weight for the religious Xenophon. The question, therefore, lies in the realm of that which is humanly impossible to decide. Xenophon speaks of such issues in *Mem.* 1.1.6-9: humans should not inquire of the gods for insight into things which they can figure out for themselves, but in obscure matters (περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων) they should consult signs and oracles. Xenophon seems to have this

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<sup>81</sup>In *Oec.* 7.10-28, Ischomachus emphasizes that the man and the woman have equal measures of memory and diligence, but each has his/her own sphere of aptitude, the man outdoors and the woman indoors (including matters related to children).



distinction in mind in the *Hellenica* passage under discussion, for after the debate between Leotychides and Agesilaus, he does not offset the argument of one contender with that of the other, as we might expect, but offsets both arguments with the contribution of Diopeithes, a man who was an expert in oracular revelations: οἱ μὲν τοιαῦτ' ἔλεγον.

Διοπείθης δέ, μάλα χρησμολόγος ἀνὴρ.... Diopeithes, speaking on behalf of Leotychides, reminded the Spartan assembly of the oracle of Apollo which warned against the lame kingship. That the Spartans chose Agesilaus, therefore, should be read as a questionable decision.<sup>82</sup> The fact that Lysander spoke for Agesilaus in contradiction to Diopeithes (3.3.3) does not put his advice in a good light and paints him as somewhat impious<sup>83</sup> and over-clever.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the statement Lysander makes in defense of Agesilaus is suspect in its own right. He said that "he did not think the god urged them to guard against someone who, having struck his foot, was lame, but rather against someone who was not of the royal family becoming king. For the kingship would certainly be lame when those not of the line of Heracles should rule the

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<sup>82</sup>In the encomiastic *Agesilaus* (1.5), Xenophon skips over the details of the choosing of Agesilaus altogether. He says only that Agesilaus was chosen over Leotychides because of superior character, which is inherently unlikely. To his mind the details did not reflect well on Agesilaus and therefore were not suitable for his encomium.

<sup>83</sup>In *Mem.* 1.3.4, Xenophon points to the practice of Socrates: "He condemned others for foolishness who acted contrary to the things revealed by the gods."

<sup>84</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 53.



city.” With respect to the first part of his statement, Krentz writes, “If it is true that Agesilaos was deformed from birth [as Plutarch and Nepos report] then Xenophon portrays Lysandros as side-stepping the point.”<sup>85</sup> With respect to the second, other ancient sources report that Lysander wanted to do away with the hereditary nature of the Spartan kingship and make it an elected position, with the hope that he himself could transfer all the fame and honour he had won as navarch into a permanent position of power.<sup>86</sup> If Xenophon and his readers were aware of this, as is altogether likely,<sup>87</sup> then he is highlighting the hypocrisy of Lysander, all the more effectively by not referring to it outright.

Later we discover Lysander’s probable motive in supporting Agesilaus for the kingship. The report of a massive Persian naval buildup greatly disturbed the Spartans in general (3.4.1), but Lysander saw it as an opportunity. He persuaded Agesilaus to propose a campaign against Persian Asia, for he wanted to accompany Agesilaus and through the king re-establish his decarchies which the ephors had previously

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<sup>85</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 178. See Andreas Luther, “Die χωλή βασιλεία des Agesilaus,” *AHB* 14 (2000): 120-9, especially 123-4, for a recent discussion which disputes that Agesilaus was lame from birth.

<sup>86</sup>Diod. 14.13.2-8, Plut., *Lys.* 24-26 and Nepos, *Lys.* 3.

<sup>87</sup>Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 160, writes, “Xenophon must have known.”



abolished (3.4.2).<sup>88</sup> This shows that Lysander still had personal ambitions in Asia, but now, perhaps because of his bruising at the hands of Pausanias, planned to work through a king to accomplish them. It also shows that his ambitions were mainly personal and not corporate, for he wanted to re-establish the idiosyncratic decarchies which were dominated by his partisans, in direct contradiction to the declaration of the ephors. This does not reflect well on Lysander,<sup>89</sup> nor does it bode well for Spartan interests in general.

The imminent conflict between Agesilaus and Lysander is foreshadowed by the former's trip to Aulis where he wanted to make a sacrifice as Agamemnon had when he sailed against Troy (3.4.3). Both clearly had ambitions which were likely to cause strife. Once in Asia, Lysander's regal manner provoked Agesilaus' anger, not to mention the jealousy of the other Spartiates (3.4.7-8). When Agesilaus refused all influence to Lysander "he was grieved at the dishonour." The dialogue which follows stresses the competition for honour and position that had developed between the two. "You certainly know how to degrade your friends, Agesilaus," said Lysander. "Yes, by Zeus, those who wish to appear greater than me at any rate; but if I should not know how to

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<sup>88</sup>This is another indication that Lysander had lost influence at home. For a discussion of the date and circumstances of the abolition of the decarchies see R. E. Smith, "Lysander and the Spartan Empire," *CP* 43 (1948): 145-56; A. Andrewes, "Two Notes on Lysander," *Phoenix* 25 (1971): 206-16; and Hamilton, *Sparta's Bitter Victories*, 123-32.

<sup>89</sup>In *Lac.* 8.2 Xenophon speaks approvingly of the most powerful men in the Spartan state showing fear and absolute obedience to the magistracies.





honour in return those who increase my honour, I would be ashamed,” replied Agesilaus. “Grant me this favour from now on in order that I might not be ashamed at my powerlessness with you” was Lysander’s response (3.4.9).

Gray suggests that “Xenophon presents Lysander’s offense as no more than accidental and innocent.”<sup>90</sup> But in light of Xenophon’s language,<sup>91</sup> and of the great ambition Lysander has displayed so far in the *Hellenica*, we are safer to assume that his action at Ephesus constituted a graphic display of Lysander’s true aspiration, which was to have royal power. Moreover, the Spartiates’ accusation that Lysander was acting contrary to the law (ὥς παράνομα ποιοίη) is also consistent with Lysander’s past activities and may be another allusion to Lysander’s opposition to the hereditary monarchy of Sparta.<sup>92</sup> Admittedly, Lysander’s response to Agesilaus’ rebuke appears straightforward and humble. He even conceded that Agesilaus’ actions may have been more appropriate than his own (3.4.9). But given Lysander’s track record, it is

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<sup>90</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon’s Hellenica*, 48.

<sup>91</sup>The royalty of Lysander’s style is emphatic. His entourage made Agesilaus look like a commoner (ιδιώτης) and Lysander the king (βασιλεύς). The other Spartiates accused Lysander of going about “more extravagantly than a king” (τῆς βασιλείας ὀγκηρότερον). It should be noted that the Spartiates attributed to Lysander a Persian rather than a Spartan approach to kingship, since Spartan royalty is not associated with extravagance.

<sup>92</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 57, says that Lysander’s idea of elective kingship “may even be hinted at with characteristic Xenophontic delicacy in the remark (3.4.7) that it began to appear that Agesilaus was the ιδιώτης and Lysander the king.”



perhaps more likely that he was cleverly, patiently biding his time, waiting until the right opportunity to accomplish his personal goals.

In the Hellespont Lysander won Spithridates over to Agesilaus. This man was one of Pharnabazus' cavalry commanders, who had been slighted somehow by his master (3.4.10). It is noteworthy that Lysander's attention fell upon someone in the same position as himself, for just as Agesilaus "diminished" Lysander (μειόω), so Spithridates had been "diminished" by Pharnabazus (ἐλαττούμαι).<sup>93</sup> The example of Spithridates shows how detrimental it is to loyalty, and ultimately to the common good, when honour is slighted. It makes us think too about the relationship of Agesilaus and Lysander. They had both dishonoured one another in turn, and now there is a question as to whether they would be reconciled and work together for the furtherance of Spartan interests in Asia.

The subsequent narrative does not tend toward a positive answer to this question. Agesilaus was pleased with Lysander's winning of Spithridates,<sup>94</sup> but there is no indication that he in any way honoured or rewarded Lysander in return for it, either here or at 3.4.20 where Xenophon reports that Lysander and the rest of the thirty Spartiates

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<sup>93</sup>In *Ages.* 3.3, Xenophon reports the cause of the dispute: Pharnabazus wanted to take Spithridates' daughter as a concubine. Here in the *Hellenica*, however, Xenophon does not report the details, which makes the emphasis fall on the nature of the offense: it was a diminishing.

<sup>94</sup>It was an especially helpful one, since Agesilaus lacked cavalry (3.4.12) and Spithridates brought two hundred horse with him.



with him sailed back home at the end of their term. “The omission may be significant.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, Agesilaus had the best opportunity to return favour to Lysander when he was given command of both land and sea forces and was told to put over the navy “whomever he himself wished” (3.4.27).<sup>96</sup> Agesilaus chose his brother-in-law Peisander, who was quite unqualified for the position, and whose appointment led to the Spartan defeat at Cnidus (4.3.10-12).<sup>97</sup> To sum up, Lysander’s overweening ambition provoked a conflict with Agesilaus which ultimately worked to the detriment of Sparta. We should note too that the ambitious Lysander has again, as in the case with Pausanias, been outstripped in honour by a rival.

Lysander’s final campaign was against the Boeotians. The Boeotians had goaded the Spartans into declaring war (3.5.5), and the ephors sent Lysander out to gather together their allies in central Greece and go to Haliartus. Pausanias agreed to meet Lysander at Haliartus on a designated day with the Peloponnesian army (3.5.6). Xenophon

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<sup>95</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 186.

<sup>96</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 100.

<sup>97</sup>Xenophon may indeed have considered Peisander a rival navarch of Lysander, since all we know of him corresponds exactly to Callicratidas, Lysander’s overtly rival navarch: Peisander was ambitious and strong-willed, but not experienced in naval activities (3.4.29); Peisander went down to defeat after boldly engaging the enemy fleet which badly outnumbered his own (4.3.10-12). See Proietti, 105-6.





emphasizes that Pausanias will be the leader of the expedition.<sup>98</sup> As at Athens, the initiative lay with Lysander, but the authority lay with Pausanias. Lysander effectively fulfilled his commission in Boeotia (3.5.6), while Pausanias mobilized the forces at home (3.5.7). Xenophon interrupts his narrative of Spartan affairs to report on the Theban efforts to win the support of the Athenians (3.5.7-17). Both before and after this interruption he juxtaposes Lysander and Pausanias. In fact, these juxtapositions form a striking chiasmus:

καὶ ὁ μὲν Λυσάνδρος τά τε ἄλλα τὰ κελευόμενα ἔπραττε καὶ προσέτι Ὀρχομενίους ἀπέστησε Θηβαίων. ὁ δὲ Πανσανίας, ἐπεὶ τὰ διαβατήρια ἐγένετο αὐτῷ, καθεζόμενος ἐν Τεγέα τοὺς τε ξεναγούς διέπεμπε καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῶν περιοικίδων στρατιώτας περιέμενεν (3.5.6-7).

Theban appeal to the Athenians (3.5.7-17).

καὶ μὴν οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι οὐκέτι ἔμελλον, ἀλλὰ Πανσανίας μὲν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπορεύετο εἰς τὴν Βοιωτίαν τό τε οἴκοθεν ἔχων στράτευμα καὶ τὸ ἐκ Πελοποννήσου, πλὴν Κορίνθιοι οὐκ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτοῖς. ὁ δὲ Λύσανδρος... (3.5.17).

The activities of Lysander in Boeotia, therefore, are to be understood against the immediate background of the activities of Pausanias.

Without this background Lyander's actions in Boeotia are inexplicable. In the battle of Haliartus, Xenophon first highlights the haste of Lysander. He arrived at Haliartus before Pausanias (3.5.17), but without waiting marched up to the wall of Haliartus with the forces he had on hand. Xenophon describes his action in the negative ("when he

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<sup>98</sup>Πανσανίας, ὅσπερ ἔμελλεν ἡγεῖσθαι, συνετίθετο...



arrived he did not remain quiet and await the force from Sparta”),<sup>99</sup> suggesting thereby that to do so was clearly an option, most likely the expected or reasonable option. “[He] was under no immediate threat except the threat of being subordinated to Pausanias.”<sup>100</sup> He attempted to persuade the Haliartans to revolt from the Boeotians, but seems not to have given the revolt adequate time to develop, for he attacked the wall “while some of the Thebans within the walls were hindering” (or perhaps “were trying to hinder”) the revolt (3.5.18).<sup>101</sup> The second thing highlighted is that the attack took place right under the walls of Haliartus. Lysander did not wait but ἦει πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος; while the Boeotians in the city were hindering an internal revolt προσέβαλε πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος (3.5.18); the one certain thing is that the battle took place παρὰ τὸ τεῖχος (3.5.19); later Pausanias was unable to recover the bodies of Lysander and his men by force because they were lying ὑπὸ τῷ τείχει (3.5.23). In his writings Xenophon often emphasizes the dangers of

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<sup>99</sup> ἦκων δὲ οὐκέτι ἡσυχίαν ἔχων ἀνέμενε τὸ ἀπὸ Λαδεδάιμονος στράτευμα “The participial clause and verb form one notion, and thus are both negated by οὐκέτι: ‘he no longer waited quietly for’. Underhill, *Commentary on the Hellenica of Xenophon*, 115.

<sup>100</sup> Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.2.11-IV.2.8*, 200.

<sup>101</sup> ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν Θηβαίων τινὲς ὄντες ἐν τῷ τείχει διέκώλουν, προσέβαλε πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος. ἐπεὶ is used only rarely with the imperfect as we find here. *LSJ* s.v. ἐπεὶ: “c. impf. to express an action not yet complete.”



encroachment on the walls of the enemy.<sup>102</sup> The implication for Lysander is clear: he acted rashly in getting too close to the walls.

To sum up, Xenophon's account of the battle of Haliartus shows that Lysander took up the attack against Haliartus in a very foolish manner. The contrast with his customary patience and caution is stark.<sup>103</sup> This rash attack caused his death, so that he died very much like his opposite, Callicratidas. Clearly something compelled him to abandon his characteristic discipline and intelligence in battle, and that something was most likely his rivalry with Pausanias: in anticipation of the king's arrival, in order to win the day himself, he hastily attacked the walls.

We should not be misled into thinking too simplistically about the point Xenophon is making about the death of Lysander. He does not simply highlight Lysander's mistake of being too rash. Nor is he mainly concerned to point out Lysander's tactical mistake of coming too close to the walls. Rather Xenophon's point has to do with the personal and corporate harm caused by unchecked ambition and the competitiveness to which it gives rise. Lysander's ambition in competition with Pausanias clearly caused his own downfall, but it also did serious damage to the cause of Sparta. Not only did Lysander in his impatience lose the battle of Haliartus, but his actions put Pausanias at a great

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<sup>102</sup>*Hell.* 1.1.33-34; 5.3.5; *Cyr.* 7.5.1-6.

<sup>103</sup>See Proletti, 103-4.



disadvantage when he arrived on the scene. Pausanias and his officers decided to recover the bodies under a truce rather than by battle. Their reasons were multiple and largely related to Lysander's defeat: Lysander was dead and the army with him had been defeated and had abandoned the war; the Corinthians had not joined them; the soldiers that they had present were not enthusiastic for the fight; they were outnumbered in cavalry; and most important (τὸ δὲ μέγιστον) the dead were lying right under the wall (3.5.23).<sup>104</sup> After the recovery, the Spartans withdrew discouraged (3.5.24).

Before Xenophon ends the present narrative to report on the situation in Asia, he concerned himself to comment on the fate of Pausanias (3.5.25). When the king returned home he was arraigned on a capital charge. He was accused first of having come later to Haliartus than Lysander. This accusation does not seem to square with Xenophon's narrative, for the impression one gets is that Lysander was in a hasty mood and that he got there earlier than the designated day. Pausanias was also condemned for having recovered the bodies of the fallen under a truce rather than by battle. But this action hardly seems culpable, for Xenophon's narrative provides a number of strong reasons for not fighting a battle for the bodies, and clearly indicates that

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<sup>104</sup>It is not entirely true, as Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 64, and Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 200 assert, that the reasonings of the Spartans in 3.5.5 are shown to be foolish by the reasonings of Pausanias and his companions in 3.5.23-24. If Lysander had not needlessly lost the initial battle and the substantial force under his command, and had he not put Pausanias under such an initial disadvantage, the prospects of a Spartan victory would have been quite good.





Pausanias made the decision in close consultation with his officers.<sup>105</sup> The last accusation against Pausanias goes back further in time: they condemned him because when he had the Athenian Demos in his power in the Piraeus, he let them go. This again appears to be an unfair charge, for Xenophon's narrative of the event in question portrays the Demos in a very favourable light and to have spared it would hardly have constituted a blameworthy act.<sup>106</sup> None of the charges seem particularly just, but they are all connected to the rivalry between himself and Lysander. There seems to be a lesson here, as in the case with Lysander's death, that unrestrained competition for honour, position and power harms the parties involved as well as their state.

But Xenophon makes a broader point as well. The imperialistic policies of Lysander lived on in the Spartan government, for it quite unfairly condemned Pausanias for little more than an unwillingness to fight the expansionist battles of the Lacedaemonians.<sup>107</sup> It seems in this that Xenophon's words in *Vect.* 1.1 are fulfilled, that the policies of

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<sup>105</sup>"Calling together his polemarchs and commanders of fifty, he deliberated..." (3.5.22); "On account of all these things it seemed good to them..." (3.5.23).

<sup>106</sup>This accusation is probably brought forward at this point because of the military assistance the Athenian Demos had just now sent to the Boeotians. The writer Pausanias (3.5.2) reports that King Pausanias was tried and acquitted for his actions in Athens right after the incident occurred.

<sup>107</sup>"When Pausanias is punished for his benevolent resolution of the Athenian civil war, what looks like simple anger over the ignominious retreat from Boeotia in fact shows a hardening of the Spartans' choice of pursuing the way of Lysander." Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 104.



a state are related to the character of its leading politicians. If the imperialistic ambitions of the Spartans are to be blamed for the ultimate loss of Spartan leadership, then the blame should begin perhaps with the unbridled ambition of individuals like Lysander. The structure of Xenophon's narrative seems to direct us to a further point. That Xenophon brings together the accounts of the deaths of the two most prominent leaders in Spartan--Agessilaus has only recently come to the throne--appears to be significant especially since it involves a major chronological displacement, since the death of Pausanias occurred at least fifteen years later than that of Lysander.<sup>108</sup> Immediately after the death of Pausanias, Xenophon provides a brief summary statement: "So then these were the things that happened throughout Greece." The end of these two leaders seems to provide an opportunity to take stock of the overall situation in Greece, which is one of instability and uncertainty, for the Spartans' hegemony appears to be crumbling in the face of the Theban-Athenian alliance and the removal of Sparta's most experienced leaders. There are real similarities between this passage and the conclusion to the *Hellenica*. Here the death of Lysander (and, to a lesser extent, of Pausanias) brings to an end the potential of one who perhaps had the skills needed to bring an orderly settlement to the affairs of Greece just as there the death of the gifted Epaminondas brought to an end the expectation that there would be a settled political establishment

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<sup>108</sup>See Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 181, note.



in Greece.<sup>109</sup> This again indicates that Xenophon's main concern in his presentation of the leading political and military figures of Greece is to show how they did not live up to their potential to bring order to Greece.

Xenophon's Lysander has certain traits which are strongly and consistently emphasized throughout his appearances in the *Hellenica*. His great intelligence and disciplined patience combine to give him an impeccable sense of timing which is displayed in such incidences as his procurement of funds from Cyrus (1.5.6-7) and the battle of Aegospotami (2.1.23-28). But he also displays an unbridled ambition for power and honour which gives rise to a disregard for constitutional and legal precedents and regularly provokes emulous clashes with other Spartan leaders to the great detriment of the Spartan state and an ordered settlement in Greece as a whole. Xenophon produces this finely-nuanced picture of Lysander solely through the skillful arrangement of the details of his narrative. In the end, however, Lysander's ambition overcomes his wisdom and patience and indeed ends his life in a very unexpected way at Haliartus. Xenophon greatly admired both personal discipline and societal order, perhaps because they are related, with the actions of the former giving rise to the latter. This was the great disappointment of Lysander: his personal discipline, which could have created a broader political order, was destroyed by his ambition, as is clearly illustrated at Haliartus, and so he failed to lead Greece to the

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<sup>109</sup>The connection between these two passages is further seen in the similarity of the summarizing statements: ταῦτ' ἐπράχθη at 3.5.25 and τούτων δὲ πραχθέντων at 7.5.26.





political stability that Xenophon finds so desirable.

### **Agesilaus**

Agesilaus appears in the *Hellenica* more often than any other figure. He was the most prominent and powerful politico-military figure in Sparta for most of the time that Sparta was the leading power in Greece. Xenophon portrays Agesilaus, his personal friend, as replete with virtues: piety, justice, friendliness, political and military astuteness. Yet he constantly undermines his portrayal of the virtues of Agesilaus by reporting details which highlight his shortcomings: anger, political and military myopia, overconcern for personal relationships, tyrannical tendencies, hypocrisy. His virtues and vices were largely those of Sparta herself, and Agesilaus' career, beginning with tremendous promise and ending in weakness and fear, followed the same general pattern as his city's. Throughout his account of Agesilaus, Xenophon seems to be posing the question, "Will Agesilaus' virtues enable him to lead Sparta to the sort of hegemony that would bring order and stability to the Greeks?" The answer, hinted at right from the start, turns out to be No.

An important part of my study of Agesilaus will involve a comparison of the *Hellenica* with Xenophon's *Agesilaus*. Xenophon wrote the *Agesilaus* as an encomium to his friend sometime after his death in 360. Much has been written about the relationship between the *Hellenica* and the *Agesilaus*, but most of the discussion is not strictly



relevant to my purposes.<sup>110</sup> The relevant point is that Xenophon goes out of his way in the *Agésilas* to highlight the king's virtues, in contrast to the *Hellenica*, in which he is not afraid to bring out the shortcomings of Agésilas since he is exploring the failure of Greek politics (and politicians). Often the comparison of a parallel passage in the *Agésilas* will elucidate Xenophon's intention in the *Hellenica*, as we shall see.

Agésilas first appears in the *Hellenica* when the Spartans were apparently flourishing. Though Athens had thrown off the yoke of the Spartan-imposed oligarchy and had a democratic government, she had sworn to be friendly to the Spartans (2.4.35) and indeed had sent three hundred horse to help the Spartans in Asia (3.1.4) and had supported the Spartans in their war with Elis (3.2.25).<sup>111</sup> The Spartans, now at enmity with the Persian King, had fared quite well in the campaign against him in Asia under the leadership of Thibron and Dercylidas (3.1.1-3.2.20).<sup>112</sup> They had also handily won their war against Elis, proving that it was well within their power to bring into line any defiant

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<sup>110</sup>See Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, 107-33; K. Bringmann, "Zu Xenophons *Hellenika* und *Agésilas*", *Gymnasium* 78 (1971): 224-41; Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 76-7; Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 39-57; Charles D. Hamilton, "Plutarch and Xenophon on Agésilas," *AncW* 25 (1994): 205-212; Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 193-7; Dillery, *History of His Times*, 114-9.

<sup>111</sup>Thrasybulus' anti-Spartan rhetoric in 2.4.41 presages an anti-Spartan reaction of the Demos, but such a reaction does not become reality until later.

<sup>112</sup>The Spartans came to Asia in response to the plea of the Greek cities there who were afraid of what Tissaphernes would do to them. They appealed to the Spartans "since they were the leaders of all Greece" (ἐπεὶ πάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος προστάται εἰσίν, 3.1.3).



state nearer to home (3.2.21-31).<sup>113</sup>

Xenophon first mentions Agesilaus at his accession to the throne (3.3.2-4). I have shown above (pp. 202-3) how Xenophon's report of the accession suggests that the choice of Agesilaus over Leotychides was a questionable one. That Leotychides was supported by a μάλα χρησμολόγος ἀνὴρ and that Agesilaus was supported by the excessively ambitious Lysander suggests that the decision in favour of Agesilaus was quite likely wrong.<sup>114</sup> The great question we are presented with then is whether Agesilaus' kingship will indeed be a lame one. And this can only be decided by the subsequent narrative of Agesilaus' reign.

The first event Xenophon records after the accession of Agesilaus is the conspiracy of Cinadon (3.3.4-11). He orients this event very specifically to the accession: "Within the first year of the kingship of Agesilaus..." (3.3.4). The story gives little prominence to Agesilaus,<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>It is true that the Boeotians and the Corinthians had refused to send forces for the campaign in Elis (3.2.25), but they were still classified as among the allies of Sparta. Their refusal to participate augurs ill for Sparta, but at this point that is all it does.

<sup>114</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 36-9, makes too much of the similarities between this story and that of the wooden walls oracle of Herodotus (Hdt. 7.142). That the lame kingship oracle should follow in broad outline that of the wooden walls should not compel us to accept Lysander's less-literal interpretation as the true one when there are indications in the text of the *Hellenica* itself that his interpretation is suspect.

<sup>115</sup>Luther, "Die χολή βασιλεία des Agesilaos," 127, suggests that Agesilaus was very active in the suppression, but that his role was a dark one. Xenophon, therefore, does not record it, either because he got his details from Agesilaus, who did not want his role revealed or because he was trying to protect the reputation of his hero. But Xenophon does not care to conceal the negative aspects of Agesilaus' activities elsewhere in the *Hellenica*, and we should not see such a process at work here.





but shows what sort of challenges Agesilaus (and the Spartan state) faced at the beginning of his reign. This incident implicitly poses the question whether Sparta under Agesilaus will show the sort of leadership which is able to overcome the tensions within her society. Furthermore, the incident hints that king and state will prove inadequate for the task, for in response to Cinadon's aspiration to be less than no one in Lacedaemon, he received a severe and humiliating punishment (3.3.11).<sup>116</sup> "His execution... must prompt the question how Sparta can proclaim itself the protector of equality and autonomy for the Greek world, when it does not practice real freedom at home."<sup>117</sup> Hamilton expresses surprise "that Xenophon even bothered to recount the story [of Cinadon], because it seems to have no relationship to any other part of his history."<sup>118</sup> But the relationship is fairly obvious. Xenophon relates the accession of Agesilaus (3.3.1-3), then a story about the internal

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<sup>116</sup>The presentation of the character of Cinadon is framed by the question of his political status. When Cinadon is first mentioned he is described as a man of youthful strength (or beauty) and very courageous; not, however, one of the peers (3.3.5). Here Xenophon seems to be saying that Cinadon had the characteristics one would expect of a full Spartan citizen, but whose actual status in the city did not match his character. Near the end of the account, Cinadon explained what he hoped to gain by his conspiracy: "To be inferior to no one in Lacedaemon" (3.3.11). Xenophon then described the punishment meted out to him with the words "after this, however, he was bound..." (ἐκ τούτου μέντοι δεδέμενος...) I suggest that the μέντοι here indicates that his noble aspirations were met with a less than appropriate response on the part of the Spartan leaders. At *Lac.* 10.7, Xenophon, speaking of the Lycurgan ideal, says that *for all alike* who fulfill the requirements of Lycurgus' code--from the context he means mainly the requirements to be brave and stalwart--Lycurgus made the city their very own. This is precisely what the Spartans of Agesilaus' day failed to do in the case of Cinadon.

<sup>117</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 116.

<sup>118</sup>C. D. Hamilton, *Agesilaus and the Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 69.





challenge facing Agesilaus and Sparta (3.3.4-11), and then a story about the external challenge, the threat of a massive Persia fleet being made ready in Phoenicia (3.4.1-2). So in this larger section Xenophon poses the question, Will Agesilaus and Sparta be equal to the challenges (both internal and external) facing them at the beginning of her hegemony and his reign?

According to the *Hellenica*, the Asian expedition of Agesilaus began as an initiative of Lysander. The great Spartan commander wanted to re-establish his decarchies in the cities of Asia and so persuaded Agesilaus to suggest the mustering of a force which the king would lead to Asia. His plan was to use Agesilaus as his pawn.<sup>119</sup> It is highly unlikely that Xenophon considered this an auspicious beginning to the expedition.<sup>120</sup> Yet the narrative goes on to show that Agesilaus had personal ambitions of his own. After he had made the customary sacrifices and informed the cities of their responsibilities to the expedition, he went to Aulis because he wanted to make a sacrifice “where Agamemnon had sacrificed when he was sailing to Troy” (3.4.3). The reference to Agamemnon characterizes the expedition as a panhellenic one,<sup>121</sup> and was meant by Agesilaus to

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<sup>119</sup>αὐτὸς συνεξελεθεῖν αὐτῷ ἐβούλετο, ὅπως τὰς δεκαρχίας... πάλιν καταστήσειε μετ’ Ἀγεσιλάου (3.3.2).

<sup>120</sup>The *Agesilaus*, as we might expect, makes no mention of Lysander's part in the origin of this expedition; the initiative in that work lies with the king alone (*Ages.* 1.7).

<sup>121</sup>In Plutarch, Agamemnon appears to Agesilaus in a dream and says, “I presume you are aware, O king of the Lacedaemonians, that no one has been appointed commander of all Greece together other than Agamemnon in the past and you now” (*Ages.* 6.4). Plutarch, typically, explicitly states what Xenophon leaves pregnantly implicit.



strike a heroic note.<sup>122</sup> Some suggest too that it presents Agesilaus as arrogant<sup>123</sup> and his ambition toward Asia as somehow flawed.<sup>124</sup> But elsewhere in his writings Xenophon takes Agamemnon as a positive figure (*Mem.* 3.1.4, 3.2.2) and presents this expedition to subdue Asia as admirable (*Ages.* 1.8).

But, though the sacrifice itself was not necessarily questionable,<sup>125</sup> the surrounding circumstances cast a shadow over it. When the Boeotians learned of the sacrifice they came with cavalry and ordered Agesilaus to discontinue it (3.4.4). Plutarch, defending the actions of the Boeotians, states that Agesilaus was sacrificing contrary to the laws and customs of the land in that he had his own seer conduct the ceremony rather than one appointed by the Boeotarchs. There is no hint of this implied impiety, however, in Xenophon, and it would in fact be quite out of character for Xenophon's Agesilaus to do anything impious. The context of the *Hellenica* suggests that the Boeotian action was politically rather than religiously inspired. The Boeotians had twice

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<sup>122</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 57.

<sup>123</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika*, II.3.11-IV.2.8, 184.

<sup>124</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 97.

<sup>125</sup>It is to the negative outcome of the sacrifice, rather than to the act of the sacrifice itself, that we should attribute Xenophon's suppression of the incident in the encomiastic *Agesilaus* (1.7-8).



previously refused to march with the Spartans--against Athens (2.4.30) and Elis (3.2.25)--and Xenophon attributes the first of these refusals to their fear that Sparta would add Athens to the list of cities she dominated. The Boeotians opposed Agesilaus' sacrifice, therefore, because they did not want him to have success in Asia, since this would mean an increase in Spartan power and influence. The Boeotian opposition reminds us that in fact the expedition of Agesilaus was not fully panhellenic, but was opposed by at least one major Greek state. That Agesilaus seemed powerless to stop the Boeotians from throwing down the sacrificial victims which lay on the alter was a bad sign as well, implying that he would not perhaps find the same level of success as the ancient king of Mycenae had. Agesilaus' emotional response to the thwarting of the sacrifice also bears great significance: in anger he appealed to the gods. Here we see two things which often characterized the king: his piety and his anger. The latter is especially noteworthy not only as a general characteristic of Agesilaus, but also as the initial cause (at least as far as we know from the *Hellenica*) of a longstanding and ultimately harmful animosity on the part of Agesilaus towards the Boeotians.<sup>126</sup>

When asked by Tissaphernes why he had come to Asia, Agesilaus replied that he was concerned that the Greek cities in Asia be

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<sup>126</sup>It is perhaps too speculative to assert confidently that the parallel drawn between Agamemnon and Agesilaus foreshadows the troubles the latter will have upon his forced return to Greece, but the narrative of those events in the *Hellenica* makes such an assertion attractive.





autonomous just as they were in Greece near the Spartans (3.4.5). This statement must be read as ironic. The Spartan expedition under Agesilaus had been inspired originally by the desire of Lysander to regain what amounted to personal control over the Greek cities in Asia.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, the Spartans had a very questionable record when it came to guarding the autonomy of the Greek cities near them, as seen in the recent oppression of Elis (3.2.21-31).<sup>128</sup> Certainly if Xenophon did not want to emphasize the irony of Agesilaus' statement he would have suppressed the words "near us" (παρ' ἡμῖν). In addition, Xenophon's reference to Agesilaus as Agamemnon pictures the Spartan expedition to Asia as motivated by high ambitions for conquest. Now Agesilaus did seem willing to negotiate with Tissaphernes (3.4.5-6), but we should wonder how eager Agesilaus really was for peace, for he was spontaneously exultant when Tissaphernes' deceit became manifest (3.4.11). This is best explained by the assumption that right from the start he desired war and conquest, and that his reference to freedom for the Greeks was not wholly sincere.<sup>129</sup>

The impression of Agesilaus' ambition is further reinforced by later

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<sup>127</sup>See above, pp. 196-8, 204-5.

<sup>128</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 55-6.

<sup>129</sup>Agesilaus was certainly not alone in using the cry of freedom for the Greeks as a slogan, although he was probably the first to do so, as argued by R. Seager and C. J. Tuplin, "The Freedom of the Greeks of Asia Minor: On the Origins of a Concept and the Creation of a Slogan," *JHS* 100 (1980): 141-157.



events. Xenophon reports that the actions of Agesilaus convinced the satrap Tithraustes that Agesilaus despised the power of the king and hoped to overpower the king himself (3.5.1). He then shows that Tithraustes' impression was not far wrong, for in his own voice he attributes to Agesilaus the plan to go as far inland as he was able, depriving the king of all the nations through whose territory he would travel (4.1.41). When news came to Agesilaus that his help was needed in Greece, he was vexed because he thought of what great honours and prospects he was being deprived (4.2.3).<sup>130</sup> Throughout the account of Agesilaus' Asian expedition, the reader is asked to consider whether Agesilaus would prove equal to his Asian ambition.

One great strength of Agesilaus was his piety.<sup>131</sup> He made all the required sacrifices when he set out for war (3.4.3) and refused to go further inland when the auspices were unfavourable (3.4.15). In a particularly critical situation, though Agesilaus saw that it was the right time to attack the enemy, he paused to sacrifice first (3.4.23). Also,

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<sup>130</sup>In the *Agesilaus* (1.36), Xenophon affirms that it was Agesilaus' desire to conquer the Persian empire. He writes, "he planned and expected to destroy the empire which had formerly made war on Greece."

<sup>131</sup>In Xenophon's scheme of things, piety is one of the most important military virtues. When Cambyses reviews the things Cyrus has learned about military affairs (*Cyr.* 1.6), the discussion begins and ends with reference to the gods. At the beginning, Cambyses emphasizes the importance of the knowledge of the mantic arts, stressing how important it is for a commander to know how to discern the will of the gods, and also how important it is to make the proper sacrifices to the gods to ensure their friendliness (1.6.1-6). At the end, Cambyses reiterates his first topic and says that knowledge of the will of the gods is the most important (τὰ μέγιστα) thing in ensuring military success (1.6.44). See Deborah Levine Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 54-59. Xenophon puts piety first in his list of Agesilaus' virtues in *Ages.* 3.1.2.



Xenophon paints Agesilaus' Ephesus as a truly pious place where the soldiers--led by Agesilaus--brought garlands to the temple as offerings to Artemis (3.4.18). But the most striking example of Agesilaus' piety is his response to the perfidy of Tissaphernes. Here he provides a contrast not just to the crudely impious Tissaphernes, but also to the other Greeks. Tissaphernes' whole confidence was in the strength of his army. The Greeks looked upon the situation from the opposite side, but on the same basis as Tissaphernes, for they were very disturbed when they thought that their forces were inferior to those of the Persians. In contrast, Agesilaus' response reckoned not at all with the strength of armies but only with the attitude of the gods. Beaming magnificently he ordered the Persian ambassadors to thank Tissaphernes for breaking the oath, thereby making the gods the enemies of the Persians and the allies of the Greeks (3.4.11). Agesilaus' exuberance was obviously that of one who truly believed that religious matters were of the utmost importance to military outcomes.<sup>132</sup>

Xenophon also stresses Agesilaus' military astuteness. Once war was officially opened, Agesilaus became the deceiver and Tissaphernes the simpleton. Agesilaus twice outwitted his foe (3.4.12 and 3.4.20-24). In the *Agesilaus*, Xenophon makes explicit what the *Hellenica* leaves to inference: "This too displays effective military leadership, because when

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<sup>132</sup>In the *Agesilaus* Xenophon emphasizes the practical benefits of this act of piety, pointing out that in being true to his word under duress Agesilaus produced a confidence in his honesty that encouraged both Greeks and barbarians to enter into agreements with him (*Ages.* 1.12, 3.2).





war is declared and, as a result, deception becomes holy and just, he revealed Tissaphernes to be a child at deception" (*Ages.* 1.17).<sup>133</sup> Agesilaus' plan to make up for a deficiency in cavalry was highly effective (3.4.15).<sup>134</sup> Agesilaus did an admirable job in putting Ephesus on a war footing, giving prizes to those most skillful in the various martial arts, which produced an enthusiasm for training that filled the *gymnasia*. Full too were the markets with weapons of every sort and with artisans applying their craft to military products (3.4.16-18). Agesilaus was efficient too at raising money for his soldiers, particularly from the enemy (3.4.12, 21, 24, 26), which is a great Xenophontic virtue (see *Hell.* 5.1.17). The Spartans were so confident in his abilities that they gave him command over the navy in addition to the army (3.4.27), and he so inspired both the cities and individuals with an enthusiasm for the Spartan cause that he soon increased the number of triremes by 120 (3.4.28). This ability to produce willing compliance, also observed in the eagerness of the rich to produce cavalymen and in the martial enthusiasm of the soldiers and artisans in Ephesus, makes Agesilaus a truly "divine" commander (*Oec.* 21.12).

But the picture of Agesilaus is not entirely positive. Gray asserts that his altercation with Lysander (3.4.7-9) displays his self-control and

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<sup>133</sup>See also *Cyr.* 1.6.27-38.

<sup>134</sup>We should not think that the non-noble composition of this cavalry force was a problem for Xenophon. In the *De vectigalibus*, he encourages the Athenians to allow the metics to join the cavalry, having just recommended that they not be allowed to serve as hoplites (*Vect.* 2.2-5).





reasonableness in that he kept tight control of his anger and spoke with grace and wit.<sup>135</sup> But Xenophon explicitly says that the anger of Agesilaus was evident (3.4.8),<sup>136</sup> and Agesilaus' reaction was hardly a rational one, for he turned down the requests of anyone for whom Lysander was advocating, without regard for justice or prudence. This is surely an example of how anger obscures a leader's good judgement.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, Agesilaus appears to have held a grudge against Lysander, for although he said he would be ashamed not to honour those who increase him (3.4.9), he never did honour Lysander, though Lysander did him a very good turn when he won over Spithridates (3.4.10).<sup>138</sup> This rancour should be viewed in the same light as Agesilaus' anger at the Boeotians which he let simmer for a long time (3.4.4).<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 47.

<sup>136</sup>ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔμηνε καὶ τὸν Ἀγησίλαον ταῦτα ἐδήλωσεν ὕστερον. The use of the word μῆνιω ("cherish wrath, be wroth against" LSJ) to describe Agesilaus' anger hardly makes us feel that the anger described is characterized by mildness and control.

<sup>137</sup>Note that when Agesilaus did not get angry at the provocation of Tissaphernes, he met with great success (3.4.11-12).

<sup>138</sup>See above, p. 207-8. Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 57 makes a subtler point: "Normally when talking of friendship in the context of rulers, Xenophon stresses the benefits conferred by the latter on their friends, not the friends' duty to exalt the already powerful."

<sup>139</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 47-8, asserts that Xenophon contrasts "the complete lack of self-control" of the Spartiates' reaction to Lysander's pomp with "the tight control" of Agesilaus' anger. It seems to me, however, that a complete lack of self-control would have resulted in the murder or maiming of Lysander, not in the perfectly reasonable response of going to the king to report the situation to him. The contrast between the Spartiates and Agesilaus is rather one of timing: they came right out with their anger, whereas Agesilaus harboured his anger for a time.



Another potential problem in Agesilaus' generalship comes to light in his appointment of his brother-in-law, Peisander, to command the navy. Our author notes both the virtues and the shortcomings of the appointee, but the final word goes to his shortcomings: "He was ambitious and brave, but inexperienced in the preparation that was required." The shortcomings of Peisander became quite apparent later at the battle of Cnidus where he brazenly ignored the clear inferiority of the Spartan fleet in comparison to the combined Greek and Persian fleet under Conon and Pharnabazus (4.3.10-11).<sup>140</sup> The choice of Agesilaus here points to the problem he had with allowing personal factors to overrule prudence. If he had wanted to appoint the most fitting candidate for the position of navarch, he would have chosen Lysander, especially since he owed a favour to him for the winning of Spithridates.<sup>141</sup> That Agesilaus did not appoint Lysander as navarch suggests that he held on to a personal grudge against Lysander as a result of the altercation in Ephesus. That he chose, instead of Lysander, a person who was not properly qualified for the job and who happened to be a relative, suggests again that personal considerations won out over practical concerns in the decision of Agesilaus. This is not the last time we will see this characteristic coming to the fore in Agesilaus' conduct.

Most of the scholarly attention focussed on the battle of Sardis

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<sup>140</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings*, 59.

<sup>141</sup>Proietti, *Xenophon's Sparta*, 100-1.



concerns itself with the discrepancies between Xenophon's accounts (*Hell.* 3.4.20-24 and *Ages.* 1.28-34) and that of the Oxyrhynchus historian (*P Oxy.* 14 [11]) whose account was, in the main, followed by Diodorus (14.80.1-4).<sup>142</sup> For my purposes, the differences between the account in the *Hellenica* and that in the *Agesilaus* are of greater significance. The description of the battle itself is virtually identical in these two works. But there are very substantial differences with respect to the aftermath of the battle. In the *Agesilaus*, the king marched against Sardis and burned and pillaged the environs of the city such that he was later able to offer two hundred talents at Delphi as a tithe (1.33-34). His further actions at Sardis gave to Agesilaus a symbolic conquest of the Persian Empire: he proclaimed that all who desired freedom should rally to his side as allies and that if anyone claimed Asia for themselves they should appear in arms to prove their claim. The effect is heightened when Xenophon reports that "embassies of friendship from all the nations were coming to him, and many in their desire for freedom revolted to him." Xenophon concludes, "He was leader no longer of the

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<sup>142</sup>Shortly after the discovery of the fragments of the Oxyrhynchus historian, G. Busolt, "Der neue Historiker und Xenophon," *Hermes* 43 (1908): 255-85, argued convincingly that the two accounts are not reconcilable. Although two studies done in 1988 independently tried to take elements from both to get to the historical truth (Lorraine Botha, "The Asiatic Campaign of Agesilaus-The Topography of the Route from Ephesus to Sardis," *AC* 31 (1988): 71-80; James de Voto, "Agesilaos and Tissaphernes near Sardis in 395 BC," *Hermes* 116 (1988): 41-53), Busolt's view still stands. Those who support the historical accuracy of *P Oxy.* are: F. Cornelius, "Die Schlacht bei Sardis," *Klio* 26 (1933): 29-31; I. A. F. Bruce, *An Historical Commentary on the 'Hellenica Oxyrhynchia'*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 150-6; Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta*, 215-6; Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika* II.3.11-IV.2.8, 188. Those who support the historical accuracy of Xenophon are: J. K. Anderson, "The Battle of Sardis in 395 B. C.," *CSCA* 7 (1974): 27-53; V. J. Gray, "Two Different Approaches to the Battle of Sardis in 395 BC," *CSCA* 12 (1979): 183-200; Hamilton, *Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, 97-8; G. Wylie, "Agesilaus and the Battle of Sardis," *Klio* 74 (1992): 118-130.





Greeks only, but also of many barbarians" (1.35).

The contrast with the *Hellenica* is stark: Agesilaus simply gains seventy talents (and some camels) and then is bought off by Tithraustes for thirty talents. With this money in hand, Agesilaus withdrew from the satrapy of Tithraustes and entered that of Pharnabazus (3.4.26). It is true that the winning of booty to supply one's men is the act of a virtuous commander in Xenophon's view, but Agesilaus' accomplishment in the *Hellenica* looks extremely shabby in comparison with that in the *Agesilaus*. Moreover, that Tithraustes went on to mistrust Agesilaus and to send fifty talents to suborn the Greeks back home (3.5.1) imbues the money that Agesilaus received from the same source with a certain taint. Furthermore, when Pharnabazus later called into question the justice of Agesilaus' occupation of his satrapy (4.1.32-33), we cannot help but feel that his complaint was justified when we remember that Agesilaus' incursion into Pharnabazus' territory was motivated by nothing other than money. So in this section Xenophon portrays Agesilaus as a leader of great ambition, ability and diligence, but who fell short of the requisite skill and vision to finally carry out the potential that he had to become master of the Persian Empire. The great expectations observed in Agesilaus' Ephesus failed of their promise.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>See Dillery, *History of His Times*, 114. P. R. McKechnie and S. J. Kern, *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (London: Aris and Phillips, 1988), 145-6 decide that the Sardis account of *P Oxy* is more historical than Xenophon's since the latter shows a disjuncture between elaborate preparations "for what seems to be intended as a decisive push" and its ineffective end. But this observed disjuncture actually reflects Xenophon's desire to highlight the failed hopes of Agesilaus' Asia campaign. G. Wylie, "Sardis," 129-30, makes an observation similar to McKechnie and Kern but comes to the opposite conclusion about the relative historical merits



At 4.1.1, Xenophon gives a telling indication of his purpose in the portrayal of Agesilaus. Just before this section, he reports the deaths of Lysander and Pausanias (3.5.16-25). He summarizes his report with the statement, “So then these were the things that happened throughout Greece” (3.5.25), drawing a link with the conclusion of the *Hellenica* and indicating that the death of these two leaders left Greece in a uncertain and disorderly state.<sup>144</sup> It is precisely at this point, with the deaths of the two most important Spartan leaders, that Agesilaus becomes the most prominent of the Spartans, and Xenophon links the reintroduction of Agesilaus here at 4.1.1 with the summary statement of 3.5.25 using a μὲν οὖν... ὁ δὲ construction.<sup>145</sup> It appears, therefore, that Xenophon is presenting Agesilaus as the one who may be able to succeed in bringing stability to Greece where Lysander and Pausanias failed, and this is how we should evaluate the rest of Xenophon’s treatment of him.

Xenophon’s account of the rest of the time that Agesilaus spent in Asia (4.1.1-41) forms a discrete section distinguished by ring composition. In 4.1.2 he writes that when Spithridates held out the promise to Agesilaus of making Otys, the king of the Paphlagonians, an ally, “he (Agesilaus) was eager to go since he had long desired to win

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of the two authors.

<sup>144</sup>See above, p. 201.

<sup>145</sup>Κατὰ μὲν οὖν τὴν Ἑλλάδα ταῦτ’ ἐπράχθη. Ὁ δὲ Ἀγησίλαος... Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 2901c, writes, “Here μὲν points forward to an antithesis to follow and indicated by δέ, ἄλλά, μέντοι, while οὖν connects with what precedes.”



some nation over from the king.” At the close of the section Xenophon reports on the ambitions of Agesilaus for another campaign against the King: “For he was preparing to go as far into the interior as he could, expecting to deprive the king of all the nations he could put behind him.” So this section begins with the very limited desire to detach “some nation” from the king and it ends with the excessively ambitious plan to deprive “all the nations” from the king. But in between these two references we discover that Agesilaus was not able to retain the one nation that he did manage to win, nor was he able to win the satrap Pharnabazus over to himself.

Xenophon gives a very colourful and detailed report of Agesilaus as a broker for a marriage between Otys and the daughter of Spithridates.<sup>146</sup> To gratify Spithridates for his part in arranging an alliance between the Spartans and Otys, Agesilaus arranged for the marriage between Otys and the daughter of Spithridates (4.1.1-3). When Agesilaus asked Spithridates if he would give his daughter to Otys, Spithridates replied “Much more at any rate, than he, as a king with much territory and power, would take the daughter of a fugitive.” The contrast in position between Spithridates and Otys shows how great a benefit Agesilaus would bestow on his friend (4.1.4). Agesilaus then cleverly convinced Otys that Spithridates’ daughter would be very

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<sup>146</sup>The difference between Xenophon and the Oxyrhynchus historian is stark here. The latter gives only a couple of lines on the alliance while Xenophon devotes over 60 OCT lines to cover the same ground. See Bruce, *Commentary on the Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, 144.





desirable as a wife, impressing upon him systematically the virtues of her fine family, her great beauty, and her powerful father (3.4.5-9). Once Agesilaus had aroused Otys' desire for the match, he shrewdly implied that Spithridates was not very interested in the match. Ironically Otys, who was unquestionably in the favourable position, ended up begging Agesilaus to convince Spithridates, who was very eager for the marriage, to give his daughter to wife. He was so keen on the marriage that he would brook no delay in order to complete the arrangement immediately (3.4.10-15).<sup>147</sup> This episode highlights the great concern Agesilaus had, and the great skill he used, to gratify his friends.<sup>148</sup>

There are, however, elements within this episode itself and in the larger context which strongly indicate that not all is positive. First, there is some question whether Otys benefitted from his interaction with Agesilaus, for the irony of their conversation suggests that he was tricked by Agesilaus into accepting as wife one whose station was below him. Moreover, part of Agesilaus' persuasion was based on the great beauty of the girl and he declared that there is nothing more pleasant to a man than to marry a beautiful woman (4.1.7). But Xenophon shows elsewhere that the pleasures of a beautiful wife or woman are not as a

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<sup>147</sup>Vivienne Gray, "Dialogue in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," *CQ* 31 (1981): 321-34, especially 321-4, has an excellent discussion of this episode.

<sup>148</sup>See Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 49-52.





rule ultimately beneficial.<sup>149</sup> Another questionable element in this passage is Agesilaus' reference to himself and the Greeks becoming a *κηδεστής* (connection by marriage) to Otys. He told Otys that if he should marry the daughter of Spithridates, not only would he have a marriage connection with Spithridates himself but also with Agesilaus, the Lacedaemonians and--since the Spartans were the leaders of Greece--the rest of Greece (4.1.8). This statement is odd, extravagant and much too familiar for the relationship which is in view.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, it is an open question whether it was a good thing to be so closely related to the "leaders of Greece". Soon after the present episode, Agesilaus was recalled to Sparta to deal with the growing resistance to Spartan leadership in Greece (4.2.1-2). Even sooner Herippidas treated both Spithridates and the Paphlagonians with such contempt that they abandoned the Spartan alliance altogether (4.1.27).

The incidents which follow the marriage of Otys show that something went quite wrong in Agesilaus' camp. Gone, for example, was the former discipline and enthusiasm for war that were so evident at Ephesus. Xenophon provides a vivid account of the rich land in the territory of Pharnabazus where Agesilaus spent the winter (4.1.15-16), in

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<sup>149</sup>See *Cyr.* 5.1.9-16 and *Mem.* 1.1.8.

<sup>150</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 204, comments, "This suggestion seems exaggerated too."



which his troops were evidently getting soft.<sup>151</sup> When Pharnabazus happened upon some Greeks scattered about the plain, he made short work of them, killing one hundred and routing the rest (4.1.17-19). Xenophon states the cause of the Greek reversal: they were contemptuous and careless because they had not previously suffered any sort of a setback (4.1.17). I do not think that this contempt of Agesilaus' troops should be connected too closely with that which Agesilaus fostered at Ephesus by stripping the captured enemy and displaying their softness to his men.<sup>152</sup> If his action there was blameworthy and was the seed of the present contempt we might have expected Xenophon to have excluded it from the *Agesilaus*, which he does not (1.28). In the context of the discipline and military zeal evident at Ephesus, contempt for the enemy was justified and healthy; in the context of the prevailing slackness of Dascylium, it was decidedly harmful. Although Agesilaus was not directly to blame for this minor military setback at the hands of Pharnabazus, as commander he was ultimately responsible for the overall laxity of the army, just as he was responsible previously for the fine state of affairs at Ephesus. Xenophon reminds us who was in charge of the Greek forces when he reports that those fleeing the attack of Pharnabazus escaped to Agesilaus who was nearby with the hoplites

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<sup>151</sup>Compare the state of Mnasippus' soldiers at 6.2.6. The sentiment is very similar to that expressed by Cyrus the Great at the conclusion of Herodotus (9.122.1-4).

<sup>152</sup>Pace Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 58 and Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II*, 3.11-IV.2.8, 205.



(4.1.19). This makes us wonder why, if he was nearby, did he not observe and do something about his men who were scattered carelessly around the plain.

The Greeks, however, were soon able to exact vengeance on Pharnabazus. Spithridates, discovering the whereabouts of the satrap, went immediately to tell Herippidas, who then went to Agesilaus to ask for troops (4.1.20-21). It seems odd that so important and valued a friend and ally as Spithridates did not have direct access to Agesilaus. Xenophon's ideal leader was one who was always accessible to those under him,<sup>153</sup> and it seems that Agesilaus was now falling down in this regard; it was part of the general slackness in the camp. Herippidas received permission to take a force which included Spithridates, the Paphlagonians and as many of the Greeks as he could persuade. He ordered the men to assemble after supper. Their response is another good gauge of the general state of the camp: by nightfall not even half of those who were expected had shown up. Yet Herippidas left with the force that he had on hand. He fell upon Pharnabazus at daybreak, routed the enemy and gained much booty (4.1.24). But Herippidas deprived the allies of the booty they had taken in order that he might have much booty to hand over to the officials who took care of selling the spoils of war. Xenophon earlier told us that Herippidas favoured this foray against Pharnabazus because he wanted to do something glorious

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<sup>153</sup>See Hermocrates (1.1.30) and Teleutias (5.1.14).





(4.1.21). He apparently wanted to have a spectacular haul of booty to show off, but as a result he completely disregarded the feelings of the allies and the obligation he had to them.<sup>154</sup> Later in the *Hellenica*, the Spartan commander Phoebidas is said to have had a great desire to do something glorious (5.2.28). His desire spurred him on to the great folly of seizing the Theban Cadmea. Herippidas' actions should be seen in the same light.<sup>155</sup> For our interests, though, the significant issue is that Agesilaus tolerated such behaviour, for though Herippidas clearly acted with great foolishness, and though Agesilaus rued the loss of Spithridates and the Paphlagonians more than anything else in the Asian campaign (4.1.28), he did not punish Herippidas;<sup>156</sup> we even find Herippidas commanding a contingent at the battle of Coronea (4.3.15).<sup>157</sup> Agesilaus clearly failed to make his underlings pay for their mistakes and this must be viewed as an element of his overall laxity.

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<sup>154</sup>Xenophon highlights the extent of the offense the allies felt: They could not tolerate suffering these things and packed up and left feeling that they had been wronged and dishonoured. "Xenophon clearly felt their feelings were justified" (Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 206). See *Cyr.* 4.2.42-44 for Xenophon's idea of the proper attitude toward booty for the allies.

<sup>155</sup>The description of Herippidas' desire and Phoebidas' are quite similar. Concerning Herippidas Xenophon writes, ἐπιθυμῶν λαμπρὸν τι ἐργάσασθαι, and concerning Phoebidas, ἣν τοῦ λαμπρὸν τί ποιῆσαι πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ ζῆν ἐραστής.

<sup>156</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 59.

<sup>157</sup>See also 4.2.8 where Herippidas is said to have been appointed one of the judges who would decide which of the troops would get the prizes that Agesilaus had designated for the best contingents.



The loss of Spithridates and the Paphlagonians was a great blow to Agesilaus' ambitions in Asia, and so he turned to his erstwhile enemy, Pharnabazus. The satrap showed himself superior to Agesilaus (and the Spartans) throughout the exchange between the two. The conference began with the satrap feeling shame at his own luxury in the face of Spartan simplicity. The Persian's shame marks him as a noble man<sup>158</sup> and so does his response: he spurned the embroidered carpets his servants had spread for him and sat on the bare ground like the Spartans. His speech recounted in detail how zealous he had been for the Spartan cause (4.1.32) and we are certainly expected to see the justice in his claims, for they correspond perfectly (if not yet fully) with his efforts recorded in 1.1.24-24 and 1.1.6. He then contrasted his faithfulness to the Spartans with their treatment of him and ended with a plea: "If I do not understand what is holy and just, please teach me how these are the actions of those who know how to repay kindness" (4.1.33). Pharnabazus' speech was fair and forceful. Everything he said was true and just. The thirty Spartiates knew this and they all responded to his speech with silent shame (4.1.32).

Agesilaus finally broke the silence in order to justify himself. He said that when states are at war, even friends will fight and even kill each other. Now that the Spartans were at war with the King, Agesilaus said, they were compelled to consider all his possessions as those of the

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<sup>158</sup>"The fact that he is capable of shame labels him a good man." Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 56.



enemy (4.1.34). In other words, Agesilaus was claiming that he had no choice but to attack Pharnabazus and ravage his land. Yet the preceding narrative shows that this was not true. Agesilaus in fact had entered Pharnabazus' territory because he had been bought off by Tithraustes (3.4.26). Moreover, when the Spartans first attacked Pharnabazus' territory under Dercylidas, their real enemy was Tissaphernes, and Dercylidas only attacked Pharnabazus because he nursed a longstanding, personal grudge against him.<sup>159</sup> Agesilaus' speech is also dishonest in that he promised the Persian that if he allied himself with the Spartans he would become free and would not simply be exchanging one master for another. The recent experience of Spithridates and the Paphlagonians under Herippidas sufficiently puts the lie to this statement.

Agesilaus' speech showed a measure of (typically Greek) contempt for Pharnabazus the Persian. He described Pharnabazus' fellow satraps as "fellow slaves" (ὁμοδούλοι, 4.1.36) and made the assumption that all of Pharnabazus' own possessions belonged strictly to the king (4.1.35). This latter statement flew directly in the face of what Pharnabazus had

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<sup>159</sup>The Greek cities in Asia appealed to Sparta for help initially because they were frightened of Tissaphernes (3.1.3). The first Spartan commander of the relief force was Thibron who, though ineffectual, at least seems to have been attacking Tissaphernes (3.1.4-7). When Dercylidas arrived to replace Thibron, he was quite happy to make an agreement with Tissaphernes and then to attack Pharnabazus because when Dercylidas was harmed most of Abydus, Pharnabazus had made an accusation against him. In fact, Dercylidas was made to stand at attention holding his shield, which was the penalty for disorderliness (ἀταξία; 3.1.9). Xenophon seems to suggest that Dercylidas was in the wrong here, for though he leaves it an open question whether Dercylidas was actually guilty of disorderliness, the following narrative often shows Dercylidas, clever though he was, displaying repeated acts of laxity, while Pharnabazus is shown to be quite disciplined (3.2.2-4; 3.2.14-15; 4.1.17, 25).





just said in his own speech.<sup>160</sup> He had said that he did not have even supper “in my own land.” Even more to the point, “I see all these things which my father passed down to me, in which I rejoice, either carried off or burned up” (4.1.33). Agesilaus also supposed that Pharnabazus was motivated largely by the desire for riches, for he makes a distinction between himself (and the other Spartans) and Pharnabazus, assuming that freedom in place of money is fine for the Spartans, but not for this Persian: “Indeed, I myself consider freedom to be worth more than all the money there is. We, however, do not urge this situation on you...” (4.1.35). As a final appeal to win the Persian to his side Agesilaus said, “Indeed if you should at once be free and rich, what would keep you from being entirely happy?” (4.1.36). Agesilaus implied that the Persian’s life was characterized by slavery and the desire for money.

Pharnabazus, however, proved Agesilaus entirely wrong. He had already shown a sense of shame before the Greeks at his own luxury. And after Agesilaus finished his speech, Pharnabazus told him forthrightly that he would not abandon his loyalty to the Great King unless the king dishonoured him, for “so great a thing, it seems, is the love of honour (φιλοτιμία)” (4.1.37). By this he showed himself faithful,

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<sup>160</sup>Gray, “Dialogue in Xenophon’s *Hellenica*,” 324-6, argues that Agesilaus’ speech was a persuasive one whose effectiveness was based on “a calculated appeal based on reaction to Pharnabazus’ speech.” It seems odd to me, however, that Agesilaus’ speech should be read as appealing when he specifically contradicts a number of the things Pharnabazus has said without providing the least evidence to support his stance. Moreover, the speech was manifestly not effective, for it failed to persuade Pharnabazus. Indeed, even Agesilaus’ expression of admiration for Pharnabazus and his withdrawal from the satrap’s territory did not appease the indignation of Pharnabazus, for later we find him still angry and planning an invasion of Laconia to avenge the things he had suffered at Spartan hands (4.8.6).





since he expressed true loyalty to his friend, the king, and noble, since he was motivated by the typically Greek concern for φιλοτιμία.<sup>161</sup> At this Agesilaus recognized the virtue of the satrap: “O most excellent man, I wish that you, since you are so great a friend, would be a friend to us.” Pharnabazus in fact showed himself superior to Agesilaus and the Spartans in a number of ways. First, he was wiser than Agesilaus. The Spartan king did his best to persuade him to revolt from the king, but, unlike Otys, he saw through the vanity of Agesilaus’ words. Second, his fidelity was greater than the Spartans’. While the Spartans had betrayed him, he maintained a steadfast loyalty to the king. Finally, he was more noble than the Spartans, for his virtue was not dulled by luxury, as they in his rich land had been, but remained sharp because of his love of honour. The military significance of this episode is profound. As a friend Pharnabazus would have proved a great military asset; as an enemy he would prove formidable. He said, “If the king assigns me to command... you must know well that I will make war against you to the greatest extent of my ability” (4.1.37), and he was certainly as good as his word (see 4.3.10-12; 4.8.1-3, 6-10).

After the conference ended, Pharnabazus rode off, but his son remained and exchanged gifts with Agesilaus. Xenophon then records how later, when the son was an exile in Sparta, Agesilaus did everything

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<sup>161</sup>For the generally positive connotation of φιλοτιμία among the Greeks see Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, 230-2.



he could to get the ἐρώμενος of the boy (who was now no doubt a man) entered into the στάδιον race at Olympia (4.1.39-40). It is not obvious why Xenophon includes this story. The point may lie in the richness of Agesilaus' gift to the son, which indicates that the Spartans were more concerned with wealth than Pharnabazus.<sup>162</sup> But this aspect of the story does not receive the greatest emphasis. The point may be that Agesilaus was a firm friend when given the chance and would have proved so to Pharnabazus.<sup>163</sup> This approach rightly takes into account that the emphasis of the story lies in Agesilaus' great efforts to repay the kindness of a brief meeting years previous. But I think there is more to it than that. This section of the *Hellenica* (4.1.1-41) begins and ends with a story of Agesilaus' great interest in gratifying friends. But it largely records the military reversals and ineffectiveness of Agesilaus. The impression given is that Agesilaus is much more attentive to relational activities than to military discipline. Later Xenophon shows how the former concern was positively harmful to the Spartan state, but for now there is just the hint of it.

In the beginning of this section of the *Hellenica*, Agesilaus was overjoyed to win over to his own side one ally (Otys) on the fringes of the Persian Empire. There followed the loss of that ally and the failure to

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<sup>162</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika* II.3.11-IV.2.8, 207.

<sup>163</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 57-8.



make an alliance with Pharnabazus. At the end of the section, Agesilaus was hoping to penetrate as far as he could into the heart of the Empire, winning over all the nations through which he passed (4.1.41). Yet his expectations were vain. Xenophon is showing that Agesilaus, for all his good qualities, was not equal to his great ambitions for Asia. His recall to Sparta, therefore, did not prevent him from conquering the Great King, but rather preserved him from an ineffectual campaign or something worse.

When Agesilaus received a summons to return home to help Sparta in her impending war in Greece, he did so obediently but not happily. It vexed him (χαλεπῶς ἤνεγκεν) to think of what great hopes and honours he was being deprived (4.2.3). In the *Agesilaus*, there is no mention of the anguish of the king: he obeyed the state no differently than if he had been standing alone before the Five in the hall of the Ephors, for he valued his homeland more highly than all the world (1.36). Moreover, in the *Hellenica* he assured the allies in Asia that he would not forget them but would return to Asia “if affairs in Greece go well.” Agesilaus’ hesitancy to return home and his desire to go back to Asia cannot have been positive to Xenophon. In the *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum*, Xenophon speaks of the “good old days” of Lycurgan purity when it was not permitted for Spartans to live abroad lest they be infected with the laxity of foreigners. He criticizes contemporary leaders whose great desire is to be always ruling over a foreign land (14.4). There is no mention of the Spartan king’s desire to return to Asia in the *Agesilaus*,





for this would not have reflected well on him.

To induce as many as possible of the best troops from Asia to accompany him to Greece, Agesilaus offered prizes. To Xenophon, prizes were a good way to motivate soldiers<sup>164</sup> and he painted the prize competitions of Ephesus in glowing terms (3.4.16). Yet on the eve of Agesilaus' return to Greece, the atmosphere was quite different from that of Ephesus. Agesilaus was not now encouraging soldiers who were already enthusiastic for the enterprise, but rather trying to motivate soldiers who did not want to go with him. Xenophon reports that at first the Asians all voted to go with Agesilaus to help Sparta. But when it came down to it, "most of the soldiers wanted to remain rather than to make war against the Greeks" (4.2.5). It was this that caused Agesilaus to offer prizes and to declare that they would not be awarded until they crossed over into Europe. Xenophon hints further at the poor attitude of the Asian troops when he says that Agesilaus announced the European venue for the prizes "in order that they might know well that it was necessary for the soldiers to be in good order" (4.2.6). And it seems that the attitude of these troops remained unimproved by Agesilaus' contests, for when news of the Spartan disaster at Cnidus reached the Spartan king, he considered that the majority of his troops were of the sort who would not stick it out in difficult circumstances (4.3.13). That his troops were not really willing to go with him did not bode well for Agesilaus'

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<sup>164</sup>See references in Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 188.



prospects in Greece, nor did it reflect well on his leadership.<sup>165</sup>

The wealth of his army also reflected badly on Agesilaus. In Ephesus the prizes awarded by Agesilaus were the prizes of honour: garlands which the winners dedicated to Artemis (3.4.18). But now they were the sort that appealed to people to whom luxury was more important than honour: “the majority... were elaborately wrought and decorative,”<sup>166</sup> and there were also golden crowns.” The worth of these prizes was no less than four talents. With such a great amount being lavished on prizes, Xenophon says, the army was outfitted with arms worth very much money (4.2.7). Previously there were already indications that Agesilaus’ army in Asia could rival the Persians for richness (4.1.39), but now the situation had deteriorated further.

Before Xenophon switches focus to events in Sparta, he writes, “Agesilaus... took the same road which the King took when he made war against Greece” (4.2.80). This reference to Xerxes is reminiscent of that to Agamemnon earlier (3.4.3). Both occur at important points in the narrative, the first when Agesilaus was about to cross over to Asia, and the second when he began his march back into Greece. The first connects him with a traditional Greek hero bent on conquest in the

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<sup>165</sup>In the *Agesilaus*, there is no hint whatever that the Asian troops were hesitant to go with Agesilaus to Greece. On the contrary, they showed that their love for Agesilaus was not fabricated since they accompanied him willingly even though they realized their Greek adversaries would not be inferior to themselves (1.38).

<sup>166</sup>Xenophon’s language here is pointed: the wrought prizes were εἰς κόσμον.



East. The second connects him with the great King Xerxes who launched his massive attack against the Greeks for the ostensible purpose of revenge against the Athenians but actually to conquer all those Greeks who were free and to make them his slaves.<sup>167</sup> The reference to Xerxes' route is more than a simple geographical note. In the *Agésilas* Xenophon draws positive significance from the reference to Xerxes: Agesilaus passed through the same tribes as did the Persian king but he covered the route which took the Persian a year in less than a month. Agesilaus' great speed indicated his level of concern for his homeland (*Ages.* 2.1). Yet the reference in the *Hellenica* has a negative cast. At the very least "the comparison hints that Agesilaos approaches Greece as a would-be conqueror."<sup>168</sup> It also strongly suggests that the hopes of Agesilaus for a positive outcome in Greece would not likely materialize, for Xerxes had similar hopes of conquest before his disastrous expedition. The narrative of 4.2.1-8 suggests a number of significant parallels between Agesilaus and Xerxes: Agesilaus' concern to return to Greece with as large an army as possible is similar to the desire of Xerxes;<sup>169</sup> Agesilaus' offer of prizes for the best troops corresponds to

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<sup>167</sup>See especially Hdt. 7.8.β1-γ3 and 7.138.1.

<sup>168</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon: Hellenika* II.3.11-IV.2.8, 210. See also Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 106 (followed by Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 60), who calls this reference "ominous".

<sup>169</sup>Hdt. 7.19.2-20.2 and throughout books 7 and 8.





Xerxes' offer of prizes to his governors for their troops;<sup>170</sup> Agesilaus' prizes themselves were not the traditional Greek prizes of simple garlands, but more like those of Xerxes who offered silver, gold or chattel prizes;<sup>171</sup> the ornate arms of Agesilaus' soldiers were reminiscent of the equipment of the army of Xerxes.<sup>172</sup> So Xenophon's characterization of Agesilaus has gone through an intriguing and none-too-flattering shift. The Spartan king began by being likened to a Greek monarch marching against the barbarian east but ended up like the powerful but despotic Persian king whose desire was to conquer and dominate the Greeks.<sup>173</sup>

When Agesilaus was at Amphipolis, Dercylidas met him and announced the Spartan victory in the battle near Corinth: the Lacedaemonians had lost only eight soldiers, while the enemy had lost very many (παμπλήθεις); quite a few (οὐκ ὀλίγοι) of the allies had also

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<sup>170</sup>Hdt. 7.8.81, 7.19.2, 7.26.2.

<sup>171</sup>Xerxes told his governors, ὅς ἂν δὲ ἔχων ἦκη παρεσκευασμένον στρατὸν κάλλιστα, δώσω οἱ δῶρα τὰ τιμιώτατα νομίζεται εἶναι ἐν ἡμετέρου (Hdt. 7.8.81). Later when the Persians discovered that the prizes that the Greeks competed for were olive garlands, Tritantaichmes, "learning that the prize was a garland and not money" (στέφανον ἀλλ' οὐ χρήματα) exclaimed to Mardonius, "What sort of men have you led us out to fight against who compete not for money but for honour" (οὐ περὶ χρήματα... ἀλλὰ περὶ ἀρετῆς, 8.26.3).

<sup>172</sup>Hdt. 7.41.2, 7.83.2.

<sup>173</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 117, speculates that the comparison of Agesilaus to Xerxes stems from Xenophon's "disappointment and even anger" arising from the fact that Agesilaus would now be fighting against fellow-Greeks rather than against the barbarians. But the care with which Xenophon seems to compare Agesilaus and Xerxes and the fact that the comparison in the *Agesilaus* reflects positively on Agesilaus suggests that it is not strong negative emotion but rather serious political reflection which gives rise to the Xerxes reference in the *Hellenica*.





fallen (4.3.1). Agesilaus appears to have had nothing but joy at this news, and urged Dercylidas to announce to the allies in Asia the splendid news (κάλλιστα). He rejoiced because the victory would likely hasten his return to Asia, for he ordered Dercylidas also to remind the Asians of his promise to return (4.3.2). In the *Agesilaus*, Agesilaus lamented the losses of the enemy since these would have been enough to defeat all the barbarians, had they lived (*Ages.* 7.5). In the *Hellenica*, Agesilaus seems myopic in comparison, for though the Asian conquest was still in the forefront of his mind, he seemed not to care that there would be many fewer Greeks as potential soldiers for the enterprise. It also reflects poorly on the king that he encouraged Dercylidas' desire to be abroad, for Dercylidas fits perfectly the description of one who wanted to exercise authority abroad, a trait Xenophon condemned in the *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum*.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, he showed himself to have the same non-Lycurgan tendencies in his preoccupation with his return to Asia.

When Agesilaus defeated the Thessalian cavalry force that was harassing him, he was very pleased because he had defeated the cavalry of those who took great pride in their horsemanship with a cavalry that he himself had brought together. But his pride comes across as a bit smug, for right on the heels of the victory came the announcement of the

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<sup>174</sup>At *Lac.* 14.4, Xenophon says that formerly it was illegal for the Spartans ἀποδημεῖν (14.4). In our passage of the *Hellenica*, he says that Dercylidas was happy when Agesilaus suggested he go to Asia, καὶ γὰρ αἰεὶ φιλαπόδημος ἦν.



major Spartan disaster at Cnidus (4.2.10).<sup>175</sup> After Cnidus, Agesilaus cleverly announced that the Spartan fleet had been victorious (4.3.13) with the result that the army was encouraged and prevailed in a skirmish against the enemy (4.3.14). His actions here were those of the virtuous man who deceives his friends for their own advantage.<sup>176</sup> It is not difficult to understand, however, why Xenophon suppressed this event in the *Agesilaus*. Though Agesilaus' deception is effective, it is minimally so, since his army won only a small skirmish (ἀκροβολισμός). The very serious loss that the Spartans suffered at sea under Peisander looms huge in comparison. And it was Agesilaus who was responsible for putting the unqualified Peisander in charge of the fleet (3.4.29). This is another case where Agesilaus proved himself effective in small matters while erring in much larger ones.

Xenophon took some care in the description of the battle of Coronea because "it was unlike any other fought by us" (4.3.16).<sup>177</sup> As leader of the victorious Spartan forces, Agesilaus showed good generalship in a number of areas. The right wing, which he commanded, was thoroughly victorious, and he was soon being garlanded by his

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<sup>175</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 68.

<sup>176</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 151.

<sup>177</sup>Since it was not the greatest or bloodiest battle fought by the Greeks, its uniqueness must have stemmed from its unusual development, being a double battle. See Cartledge, *Crisis of Sparta*, 220.



mercenary troops (4.3.17-18). When it was discovered that the Thebans had broken through the Orchomenians on the Spartan left, Agesilaus “unrolled” his phalanx with typical Spartan skill<sup>178</sup> and attacked. He courageously met the retreating Thebans head-on rather than attack them from the flank (4.3.18-19). Though in pain from his many wounds, he did not strike out in anger against eighty Thebans who had taken refuge in a nearby temple, but ordered his men to let them go unharmed (4.3.20). As always, he was careful to behave properly toward the gods.

Yet Xenophon appears to raise a practical question about the generalship of Agesilaus. When he says that Agesilaus did not choose the safest course in meeting the Thebans head-on, this tactical comment must be put in its proper context in the *Hellenica*. In the very recent battle of Nemea, the Spartans found themselves in a situation very similar to that of Agesilaus at Coronea. The Spartans came upon a force of Argives, but instead of meeting them head-on as they at first intended, someone shouted that they should let them go past. They did so and then attacked them from the rear. As a result, the Spartans killed many of the enemy, but suffered virtually no losses themselves (4.2.22 and 4.3.1). Xenophon’s description of Coronea strongly suggests that there were heavy casualties on both sides: “when their shields clashed, they were shoving, they were fighting, they were killing, they were dying”

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<sup>178</sup>See *Lac.* 11 for a description of the virtues of Spartan hoplite manoeuvres, particularly 11.8 where the particular manoeuvre which Agesilaus used at Coronea (ἐξελίττειν) is mentioned. See John Lazenby, “The Killing Zone,” in *Hoplites. The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. Victor Davis Hanson (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 103-4.





(4.3.19). Furthermore, Peisander's disastrous bravado at Cnidus (4.3.10-12) is also fresh in our minds as we read the account of Coronea. Xenophon, therefore, does not likely approve of Agesilaus' reckless bravery against the Thebans.<sup>179</sup> He may be suggesting that Agesilaus' decision to meet the Thebans head-on was part of his intense anger against Thebes which would manifest itself so detrimentally again later.<sup>180</sup> But he is probably also presenting Agesilaus as an unimaginative tactician, more concerned with traditional battlefield glory than actual success.<sup>181</sup> This appears more likely from the other evidence of tactical ineptitude at Coronea. Though the peltasts of Agesilaus were far more numerous than the enemy's and his cavalry was of similar size (4.3.15), there is no indication that Agesilaus used either force to significant effect. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the battle, Xenophon reports how very close a Spartan expedition came to being wiped out by peltasts (4.3.22-23). Was Xenophon suggesting thereby that Agesilaus was lacking in his ability fully to employ the forces at his disposal? It seems so.

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<sup>179</sup>In the *Agesilaus* (2.12), the account of Agesilaus' encounter with the Thebans is given in virtually the exact form as in the *Hellenica*. But this does not compel us to view Agesilaus' action positively, for the *Agesilaus* contains none of the context which indicates that Agesilaus' bravery was foolish.

<sup>180</sup>Hamilton, *Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, 104, repeated in "Thebes and Sparta in the Fourth Century: Agesilaus' Theban Obsession," *Ktema* 19 (1994), 247. See also Cartledge, *Crisis of Sparta*, 221.

<sup>181</sup>See J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 152.



After the battle of Coronea, Agesilaus sailed back to Sparta and his endeavours thereafter were limited mainly to the Peloponnese. Xenophon probably considered this the end of Agesilaus' "invasion stage" and the beginning of a new phase in Agesilaus' career. His leadership now is often, but certainly not always, successful. He is shown to be resourceful, pious, concerned for his men and his homeland, but also occasionally peevish and short-sighted. He is no longer a great figure potentially comparable to either Agamemnon or Xerxes. Rather he is a moderately successful general, whose skills are adequate to keep the Peloponnese largely under Spartan control, but not great enough to give the Spartans a secure hegemony even over their own traditional allies. His hope of returning to Asia has now dropped completely from view.

Agesilaus' first recorded action in the Peloponnese was to invade Argive territory. He led an expedition which ravaged the entire territory of Argos, then quickly crossed over to Corinthian territory and destroyed the long walls of the city. In response to Teleutias' simultaneous seizure of the Corinthian dockyards, Xenophon notes that this was a day to make a mother proud, when one son captured the walls of the enemy and another captured the ships and dockyard (4.4.19). But if Xenophon is genuinely impressed by this fraternal cooperation, we might expect him to record it in the *Agesilaus*.<sup>182</sup> That Libys accompanied his brother Lysander in the latter's expedition in support of the Thirty (2.4.28) does

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<sup>182</sup>The *Agesilaus* records the taking of the walls by Agesilaus, but makes no mention of Teleutias or of the mother (2.16).



little to commend such arrangements.

The next year Agesilaus campaigned again in Corinthia. His main objective was Piraeum (4.5.1), but he first went to Isthmus, interrupting the sacrifice to Poseidon for the Isthmian games, which were being conducted by the Argives. Agesilaus, showing again his respect for all things religious, did not pursue the Argives as they fled, but encamped in the temple of Poseidon. He himself sacrificed to the god and then remained there until the Corinthian exiles with him had time to make the sacrifice and conduct the games. This was hardly a major military or political accomplishment, however and it was made to appear less so by the report that after Agesilaus left, the Argives came back to Isthmus and held the games a second time (4.5.1-2).<sup>183</sup> The *Agesilaus* records this expedition (2.18-19) but does not refer to the incident at Isthmus, suggesting that it did not particularly redound to the glory of Agesilaus. In the end, Agesilaus captured the cattle of Piraeum using a clever ruse which outwitted Iphicrates (4.5.3).

On this campaign, Agesilaus performed a small, timely act of consideration. He had stationed his Spartan troops on the heights near Piraeum, while he himself (presumably with the allied troops) camped at the hot springs. The troops on the heights were in a bad way: the high

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<sup>183</sup>Gray, *Character, of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 158, states that the celebration of the games by the Corinthian exiles "was a move of real political importance" because "the control of Greek games was always an indication of the status of the controlling power." Yet if this second statement is true how does it prove the first? That the Argives returned and were free to run the games under their own supervision simply shows that Agesilaus' Isthmian coup was ephemeral.





altitude and an evening storm left them shivering in the dark without fire. Agesilaus sent flame and they built many large fires for their comfort (4.5.4). Yet we might well wonder if Xenophon considered Agesilaus' action entirely good. These soldiers were, after all, members of a regular Spartan *μόρα*; surely they should have been trained to endure hardships like the present one. Moreover, immediately after remarking about the many large fires of the Spartans, Xenophon reports that on that very night the temple of Poseidon burnt down. To Xenophon this fire no doubt constituted a bad omen, presaging the imminent disaster of the Spartans at Lechaëum.<sup>184</sup> But its striking juxtaposition with the Spartans' fires suggests that these comforting fires were themselves an omen of a coming disaster. Cawkwell suggests that Xenophon, by his reference to the fire in the temple, is "perhaps exempting Agesilaus from any blame, when others had suggested that by sending up fire to the troops Agesilaus was really responsible." But it is a very strange way of exculpating Agesilaus to say, as Xenophon does, that no one knew by whom the fire was set. If the culprit was not known, it could naturally have been one of Agesilaus' men who were so glorying in their many large fires on the very night of the temple fire.<sup>185</sup>

His military success in Corinthia put Agesilaus in a strong position. Many embassies came to him, particularly the Boeotians,

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<sup>184</sup>Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 216.

<sup>185</sup>Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 267.





asking what was required for peace. Agesilaus, however, treated these envoys with great contempt, pretending not to see them, even though Pharax, the Thebans' Spartan *proxenos*, was interceding for them (4.5.6). But Agesilaus' contempt was neither noble nor wise, for soon a soldier rode up with news of the Spartan disaster at Lechaeum. The Boeotians sensed that the Spartans had suffered a setback and no longer wished to treat for peace (4.5.9). By his arrogance, therefore, Agesilaus had lost the opportunity to make an advantageous peace with the Boeotians.<sup>186</sup>

The Lechaeum disaster resulted from Spartan laxity. Xenophon writes, "They were not at all unaware that there were many peltasts and hoplites in Corinth, yet on account of previous successes they contemptuously expected no attack." This reminds us of the disaster that previously befell Agesilaus' Asian troops when past successes made them careless and contemptuous (4.1.17). Moreover, the disaster happened when the Spartans were escorting the Amycleans away from Lechaeum so that they could celebrate the Hyacinthia. Agesilaus seems to have personally made sure that the Amycleans were able to get home to celebrate the festival, for Xenophon says, "Agesilaus took all the Amycleans from the army and left them in Lechaeum" (4.5.11). It seems that Agesilaus was commendably solicitous toward his soldiers' well-being in minor matters, as with the troops on the heights who had no

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<sup>186</sup> "It is, of course, possible that the envoys would have changed their mind about the advisability of discussing peace in any event, as soon as they had learned of the defeat of the regiment. But it is undeniable that Agesilaus lost an important psychological advantage by insulting the envoys while he was triumphant." Hamilton, *Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, 116.



fire,<sup>187</sup> and with the Amycleans getting to the Hyacinthia, but neglected more important matters like ensuring that his troops were sufficiently diligent and careful.<sup>188</sup> Agesilaus is presented again, however, as a pious and upright character, for in spite of his deep dismay at the Spartan loss, he did not tear down the victory trophy which the Corinthians had set up (4.5.10). The king then took what was left of the defeated regiment and skulked back to Sparta, entering his host cities as late as possible and leaving as early as possible, most notably going past Mantinea while it was still dark so that his troops would not have to face the gloating stares of the Mantineans (4.5.18). Xenophon probably mentions Mantinea because of the way the Spartans had mocked the Mantineans for fearing peltasts (4.4.17). Now after the Spartans themselves had suffered heavily at the hands of peltasts, Agesilaus did not want to be mocked in return.

In the following year (389) Agesilaus, at the instigation of the Achaeans, campaigned in Acarnania, and overall his efforts there were met with success. He ravaged the land thoroughly but slowly, lulling the enemy into complacency until one day he led his troops on a forced

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<sup>187</sup>Xenophon himself emphasizes the minor character of this action by Agesilaus: ἐνθα δὴ καὶ ὁ Ἀγησίλαος μικρῷ καιρίῳ δ' ἐνθυμήματι ἡὺδοκίμησε.

<sup>188</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 71, referring to the happiness of those in the Spartan camp who had relatives among those who died at Lechaenum (4.3.10), suggests that if we are expected to admire this joy "it once again represents a circumscribed piece of Spartan virtue set against a wider background of vice." If this is Xenophon's approach in this passage as a whole (as I think it is) then it is likely, as I have been arguing, that he is presenting Agesilaus as virtuous in small things but not in the larger matters.



march to where the Acarnanians were keeping all their cattle. Here Agesilaus took a great haul of booty (4.6.4-6). On his way back, he was hard-pressed by the enemy, especially by the peltasts, but in the end a vigorous counter-attack gave him the victory (4.6.7-11). The next year the mere threat of another expedition led by Agesilaus caused the Acarnanians to come to terms with the Achaeans and to become allies of the Spartans (4.7.1).

Agesilaus' successes in Acarnania, however, were marred by two shortcomings, one strategic and the other moral. Strategically, "he also attacked some of the cities, being compelled by the Achaeans, but did not take a single one" (4.6.12). This failure is then emphasized again: "The Achaeans judged that he had done nothing, because he had taken not a single city either by force or persuasion" (4.6.13). This shortcoming had the potential for serious diplomatic repercussions, for the Achaeans had managed to cajole the Spartans into helping them in Acarnania by the threat of withdrawing from the Spartan alliance (4.6.2-3), with the implication that if Spartan help should prove ineffectual, the Achaeans would abandon Sparta. Agesilaus did manage in the end to avert such an outcome, but just barely, for he seems to have had neither the will ("compelled by the Achaeans")<sup>189</sup> nor the ability to overthrow cities. Many times we see him ravaging the countryside, attaining large

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<sup>189</sup>Agesilaus seemed to have had an unwillingness similar to his city's, for he is said to have attacked the cities of Acarnania ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν ἀναγκαζόμενος and earlier the Spartans are said to have felt compelled by the Achaean speech asking for help in Acarnania: ἔδοξε τοῖς τ' ἐφόροις καὶ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι στρατεύεσθαι μετὰ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν (4.6.3).





amounts of booty and winning pitched battles, but rarely do we observe him taking a city. The Acarnanian expedition also has a certain moral taint to it. Xenophon begins his account thus: "The Achaeans, holding Calydon, which traditionally belonged to Aetolia... were forced to keep a garrison in it." The entire campaign, therefore, had the purpose of keeping Calydon, which rightfully belonged to Aetolia, under the Achaean flag, and it makes Agesilaus' subsequent repeated insistences that certain states (especially Thebes) grant each city its independence, ring hollow and hypocritical.

In fact the next time Agesilaus appears in the narrative (5.1.32-34), he was pugnaciously proclaiming his concern for the independence of the Greek cities. All the Greek states had agreed to the terms of the King's Peace of 387, but Thebes wanted to swear on behalf of all the Boeotians. Agesilaus objected that this was in contravention of the treaty's provision that every city should be autonomous. He forced the Theban envoys to revisit the issue with the home authorities (5.1.32), and immediately mobilized for war. The Theban envoys returned agreeing to let the cities be independent (5.1.33). Agesilaus' threat of war also compelled the Corinthians to send away their Argive garrison, and the treaty was put into effect (5.1.34). Agesilaus appears to have acted decisively and effectively in these negotiations, for his actions brought about the independence of the Boeotian cities and of Corinth. Moreover, he made possible the peace which reflected very well on Sparta (5.1.36). A number of things in the narrative, however, reflect badly on Agesilaus



and the Spartans. Following the King's Peace, Sparta acted harshly and oppressively against hesitant allies, who were supposedly independent (5.2). Moreover, Agesilaus' motive for his mobilization against Thebes is explicitly said to be "his personal enmity (ἔχθρα) against Thebes" (5.1.33). Xenophon says that the Thebans were "forced" (ἡναγκάσθησαν) to enter into the treaty. This did not bode well for future peace. From now on in the *Hellenica*, Agesilaus often acts out of anger, and not only against Thebes.

When the Spartans decided to mobilize against the Mantineans, Agesilaus begged leave not to be involved, because his father had been helped by the Mantineans many times in the past (5.2.3). Yet his words seem specious in light of his statement to Pharnabazus earlier that when states go to war, even citizens of these states who are guest friends will go to war against each other (4.1.34). Moreover, Xenophon reports that Agesipolis led the army "even though in fact his father Pausanias was friendly to the leaders of the Demos in Mantinea." It may be that Agesilaus was concealing his real reason for not wanting to lead the expedition;<sup>190</sup> Xenophon tells us later that he used a false excuse when he refused service against Thebes (5.4.13). Yet I am inclined to think that Xenophon rather portrays Agesilaus here as again being too

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<sup>190</sup>Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 258 says that Xenophon hints that Agesilaus was hiding his real reason, but that we are left to speculate what that reason was. Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 89, believes that Xenophon's reference to Agesipolis' family connection to Mantinea had the intent of making Agesilaus "appear hypocritically disinclined to accept the opprobrium involved in coercing Mantinea."



concerned with personal matters. Consider also Agesilaus' campaign against Phlius (5.3.10-25), in which Agesilaus was pleased to march against Phlius in support of his father's friends and his own (5.3.13). Xenophon has a good measure of sympathy for the Phliasians (see especially 5.3.21-22) and it is therefore unlikely he thinks that Agesilaus' motivation for attacking them was particularly good. Moreover, Xenophon puts into the mouth of some of the Spartans the explicit criticism that for the sake of a few men they were antagonizing a city of more than five thousand (5.3.16). That criticism, I suggest, is Xenophon's own.<sup>191</sup> In fact, this section as a whole seems to emphasize the personal nature of Agesilaus' approach to affairs. Xenophon interrupts the Phliasian narrative to tell of the death of Agesipolis (5.3.18-19). His report focusses on the close personal relationship between Agesipolis and Agesilaus (5.3.20). Xenophon assumes that the two Spartan kings would normally view each other as rivals or adversaries and that the typical response of one king toward the death of the other would be rejoicing. "Agesilaus... did not respond as one might expect one to respond to the death of a rival." He instead viewed Agesipolis as a friend and reacted with great sadness to the news of his

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<sup>191</sup>In the *Agesilaus* (2.21), Xenophon commends Agesilaus for his campaign against Phlius because his restoration of the Phliasian exiles showed that it was motivated by love for comrades (φιλεταΐρια), yet he concedes that someone might find some reason to blame him for this action. It is likely that he had in mind the criticism found at *Hell.* 5.3.16.





death.<sup>192</sup> Returning to the Phliasian campaign itself, Xenophon reports that it ended with Agesilaus taking personal umbrage at the Phlians because they did not assume that he himself had authority to treat with them (5.3.24-25). It is axiomatic for Xenophon, of course, that nothing should be done out of anger (see especially 5.3.7). So we see Agesilaus repeatedly allowing personal concerns, especially personal relationships, to (adversely) influence his judgements and actions.

Agesilaus' judgement was also seriously impaired in his response to the seizing of the Cadmea by Phoebidas. Xenophon describes Phoebidas thus: "He was much more passionate to do something glorious than to live; he was not known, however, to be very intelligent or at all prudent" (5.2.28).<sup>193</sup> On the whole the Spartans disapproved of Phoebidas' action because he had not received prior approval from the state for his actions (5.2.32). Agesilaus, however, argued that a commander in the field had authority to do anything that was beneficial to the state; therefore they should determine whether this action was harmful or beneficial to Sparta (5.3.32). He himself apparently judged

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<sup>192</sup>Diodorus' take on the relationship between these two kings is quite different, emphasizing the antipathy that existed between the two (15.19.4). On this topic see D. G. Rice, "Agesilaus, Agesipolis, and Spartan Politics, 386-379 B. C." *Hist.* 23 (1974): 164-82 and Hamilton, *Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, 122-3.

<sup>193</sup>It is perhaps significant that Eudamidas, the brother of Phoebidas, got Phoebidas his command, choosing him apparently for no other reason than that he was his brother (5.2.24). The descriptions of Phoebidas and that of Peisander, whom Agesilaus apparently chose for command because he was his brother-in-law, are very similar (compare 3.4.29). Xenophon is perhaps suggesting that it was a common practice among the Spartans to choose men for command because of their relationships rather than for their fitness for the job.





that Phoebidas' action was good for Sparta. Xenophon does not say why Agesilaus felt as he did about the seizure of the Cadmea, but the larger context suggests it was out of hatred toward Thebes (see especially 5.1.33). After Leontiadas spoke glowingly of how much help the Spartans could now expect from Thebes, the Spartans decided they would support Phoebidas' action and maintain a garrison in the Cadmea. It is significant that the Spartans showed no concern with the morality of the seizure of the Cadmea; even those who opposed the seizure were simply annoyed that Phoebidas had acted with no sanction from the authorities at home. Xenophon makes it appear at first that Agesilaus and the Spartans might have been right about the Cadmea affair, for in a summary statement in 5.3.27, he says that with all the Boeotians submissive to Sparta (as well as the Corinthians faithful, the Argives humbled, the Athenians isolated and the recalcitrant allies punished), it appeared that the rule of the Spartans had been altogether well established. He then declares, however, that the gods do not ignore those who are impious and practice wickedness. But his immediate interest is in just one case: the Spartan seizure of the Cadmea, which culminated in her defeat at Leuctra (5.4.1). In spite of the short-term wisdom of Agesilaus' approach to Phoebidas' action, it would ultimately prove very foolish indeed. And this is not the only case where Agesilaus' approach proved short-sighted.

Xenophon appears even more critical of Agesilaus' part in the decision about Sphodrias, who made an attempt to seize the Piraeus



about four years after the seizure of the Cadmea. Whereas Phoebidas seized the Cadmea because of an excessive desire for honour, Sphodrias was bribed into making his attack on Attica. Although Xenophon only says that it was suspected (ὥς ὑπώπτευετο) that Sphodrias took a bribe, the narrative assumes that the suspicion was true: Sphodrias “pretended” (προσποιησάμενος) that he would seize the Piraeus; though he claimed they would reach the Piraeus before daybreak, the day found them still only at Thria; here he made no attempt to hide the presence of his forces but having seized cattle and destroyed some homes in the area, he turned back. In other words, he made no serious attempt at all to seize the Piraeus, but simply made his menacing presence manifest to provoke Athens as he was paid to do.<sup>194</sup> The other ancient sources are not quite as negative in their portrayal of Sphodrias: though they present him as over-ambitious, foolish and unsuccessful, they do not portray him as corrupt.<sup>195</sup> Indeed it is easier to believe, as the other ancient

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<sup>194</sup>Alexander MacDonald, “A Note on the Raid of Sphodrias,” *Hist.* 21 (1972): 38-44, believes that the nonchalance of Sphodrias arose from the fact that Cleombrotus had put him up to the raid and would support him if anything went wrong. R. M. Kallet-Marx, “Athens, Thebes, and the Second Athenian League,” *Cl. Ant.* 4 (1985): 127-51, especially 149-51, argues that Sphodrias did nothing to conceal the raid because it was intended to frighten Athens into severing her ties of support for Thebes. Neither of these conjectures, however, is easily supported from Xenophon’s narrative.

<sup>195</sup>Diodorus says that he was “by nature excitable and reckless” (φύσει δ’ ὄντος μετεώρου καὶ προπετοῦς) and that Cleombrotus persuaded him to seize the Piraeus. The Athenians detected him and so his enterprise failed (15.29.5-6). Plutarch clearly assimilates Sphodrias to Phoebidas, saying of the former that he was a bold and ambitious man, who was always full of high hopes rather than good judgement (οὐκ ἄτολμος μὲν οὐδ’ ἀφιλότιμος ἀνὴρ, αἰεὶ δ’ ἐλπιδῶν μᾶλλον ἢ φρενῶν ἀγαθῶν μεστός). He desired a great name and thinking of the daring deed of Phoebidas at Thebes, thought it would be even more glorious (λαμπρότερον) if he himself should seize the Piraeus (24.3). Plutarch also reports the story that he was flattered into the action by Thebans pretending to be Spartan sympathizers. Sphodrias’ attempt was a



sources suggest, that Sphodrias' action was inspired by the same reckless bravado as was Phoebidas'. Moreover, the similarities between the two actions seem so obvious that Xenophon must have had a clear purpose in differentiating them as clearly as he did. His purpose, it seems, is to highlight how the situation at Sparta had deteriorated even further since the seizure of the Cadmea.<sup>196</sup>

The narrative suggests that Sphodrias should certainly be condemned for his folly. The Spartan envoys in Athens, who were seized by the Athenians after the raid, based their defense of themselves and of Sparta on the certainty that Sphodrias would be executed for his unauthorized folly, and the Athenians released them on that basis (5.4.22-3). The Spartans followed up by charging Sphodrias with a capital offence and he, in fear because of his obvious guilt, did not obey the summons home. The acquittal then comes as a shock--how could the Spartans possibly have let such a man go? Xenophon reports that this seemed to many (including himself undoubtedly) the most unjust judgement ever given in Lacedaemon (5.4.24).

Xenophon's account lays the blame for this unjust acquittal

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failure because though he hoped to reach the Piraeus while it was still dark, at daybreak he was still in the Thriasian plain (24.4-5). See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 126.

<sup>196</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 234, links the actions of Phoebidas and Sphodrias and says that they display "the same pattern of 'brutality and aggressiveness'." But he fails to note that there was a real difference between the two in Xenophon's account. He is right, however, when he goes on to say that Xenophon lets us see a pattern emerge between these two, "and the common denominator in both cases is Agesilaus." The pattern is not one of similarity, however, but of increasing moral decline. Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 126, emphasizes the difference between Phoebidas and Sphodrias in Xenophon's account.





squarely at the feet of Agesilaus, for by bringing his influence to bear in Sparta, the king allowed Sphodrias to escape punishment. Xenophon reports how this happened in a lengthy passage (5.4.25-43) reminiscent of both the Otys incident in 4.1.3-15 (for its length and its focus on dialogue and personal relationship) and the story of Pharnabazus' son in 4.1.39-40 (for its homoerotic elements). The story displays two main interests. The first is personal relationships, most notably that between Cleonymus the son of Sphodrias and Archidamus the son of Agesilaus, and between Archidamus and his father. The second is the injustice of Sphodrias' acquittal. Sphodrias had a son named Cleonymus, who was the beloved of Archidamus. Sphodrias therefore encouraged his son to appeal to Archidamus to make Agesilaus well-disposed to him (5.4.25-26). When Archidamus finally got up the nerve to approach Agesilaus with his request, Agesilaus was sympathetic but said that he did not see how he could hope to find sympathy from the city if he did not condemn a man who enriched himself to the harm of Sparta (5.4.30). Archidamus went away, "submitting to the justice" of what his father had said. But later he returned with a new thought: "I know that if Sphodrias had done no wrong, you would have released him. But now, though he did do something wrong, let him be forgiven by you for our sake." Here Archidamus put personal relationship in place of justice. Agesilaus answered: "Well then, so it will be, if it is possible for these things to be good for us." Archidamus walked away thoroughly dejected (5.4.31). His negative response to what was a fairly positive answer was an tacit



acknowledgement that the acquittal of Sphodrias could hardly turn out well for anyone. In the end Agesilaus was saying to everyone that it was certain that Sphodrias was guilty, but that it would be hard to kill such a man who had acted honourably in every other way throughout his life. "For Sparta needs soldiers such as this" (5.4.32). This is an astonishing statement coming from Agesilaus. Is it really true that Sparta needs corrupt soldiers? Agesilaus' wish to gratify his son and his son's wish to gratify his beloved resulted in this most unjust judgement. The homoerotic element in this story is significant as an aspect of the relational background to Agesilaus' action. A number of statements in the *Hellenica* indicate that Agesilaus was quite interested in love affairs with boys (παιδικά).<sup>197</sup> Concerning Sphodrias' acquittal, Clifford Hindley writes, "for Xenophon, at least, the story was what it appears on the surface to be: an illustration of family pressure arising from a pederastic liaison, leading to a shameful political decision."<sup>198</sup> I do not think that the homoerotic component is quite as fundamental to the story as Hindley does,<sup>199</sup> but it has its importance as one element of the relational motive which led to the unjust action of Agesilaus in setting

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<sup>197</sup>*Hell.* 4.1.6; 4.1.39-40; 5.3.20 and *Ages.* 5.4-7.

<sup>198</sup>Hindley, "Eros and military command in Xenophon," 364.

<sup>199</sup>See also Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 126, who writes, "The elaborate tale includes an important--indeed determinative--homoerotic element."



Sphodrias free.<sup>200</sup>

As Hindley suggests, Xenophon is interested in the broader political implications of Sphodrias' acquittal. At the microscopic level, it appeared that the decision of Agesilaus to acquit Sphodrias was a wise one, for his son Cleonymus was very grateful to Archidamus and declared, "we will do our best that you not be brought to shame for your friendliness to us." And he was as good as his word, for at the battle of Leuctra he was the first to die, thrice wounded, fighting before the king (5.4.33). Yet at the macroscopic level, Agesilaus' action resulted in a serious detriment to the state. Before the attack of Sphodrias, Athenian public opinion was swinging decidedly toward the Spartans (5.4.19), and the Boeotians now were in grave danger of facing the wrath of Sparta alone (5.4.20). But Sphodrias' acquittal--more than the raid itself, it should be noted--was a tremendous boon to the pro-Boeotian party at Athens. The Athenians readied themselves for war and helped the Boeotians with unstinting enthusiasm (5.4.34).<sup>201</sup> Dillery, on the Sphodrias episode, perceptively concludes, "Clearly we are meant to see

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<sup>200</sup>Xenophon records other instances in which Spartan commanders fail because of παιδικά. Alcetas, the harmost of Oreus, acted admirably and very strategically in intercepting a Theban grain shipment, but then squandered his victory when his Theban prisoners took advantage of his distraction with an attractive Orean boy, captured the acropolis of Oreus and provoked a revolt against Sparta (5.4.56-7). Also Hindley, "Eros and Military Command," 350-6, has convincingly argued that Thibron's death, and the Spartan defeat associated with it (4.8.18-19), was due to his pederastic interest in the flute player, Thersander.

<sup>201</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 62, decides that "Xenophon is not writing a political analysis of the decision to acquit" because "Agesilaus never mentions the implications of acquittal for Spartan relations with Athens." Xenophon, however, clearly points up such implications in his narrative. Agesilaus' silence in this regard simply shows how myopically unconcerned he was about the broader implications of his actions.





that Agesilaus has allowed his otherwise laudable respect for the personal obligations of friendship to undermine the interests of his state.”<sup>202</sup> Later the Athenians “being angry at the Lacedaemonians because of Sphodrias’ deed,” sent out an expedition of sixty ships around the Peloponnese which did much damage to Spartan interests (5.4.63). Xenophon is notorious for his failure to make formal mention of the establishment of the Second Athenian Confederacy,<sup>203</sup> which arose right around the time of Sphodrias’ raid and which was furthered by the expedition around the Peloponnese. Yet the effect of the silence is to emphasize that the Spartan foolishness surrounding Sphodrias’ action was responsible for the Athenian resurgence directed against Sparta at this time; this alone may be quite adequate to explain the silence of Xenophon.

We next find Agesilaus leading the Spartan campaigns against Thebes in 378 and 377. Cleombrotus had led the campaign of 379, but accomplished little (5.4.16). It is not surprising, therefore, that they asked Agesilaus to lead the next year’s campaign. Agesilaus was happy to comply “saying that in no way would he refuse what the city decided” (5.4.35). Now it is understandable that Agesilaus would be content to go against Thebes, but he had refused to take the lead in the previous year’s

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<sup>202</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 233.

<sup>203</sup>See especially George Cawkwell, “The Foundation of the Second Athenian Confederacy,” *CQ* n.s 23 (1976): 47-60.





campaign against Thebes, claiming that his age exempted him from the requirement to campaign away from home (5.4.13).<sup>204</sup> Xenophon explains that this was just an excuse. Agesilaus' real concern was that the citizens would say he was causing the city trouble in order to bring help to tyrants (that is, those who now ruled in Boeotia). We might wonder then, what changed Agesilaus' attitude toward taking a leading role in the war. The answer may very well lie in the two events intervening between the refusal and the acceptance: the fruitless Boeotian campaign of Cleombrotus and the acquittal of Sphodrias. If we assume that the criticism which Agesilaus feared in 5.4.13 arose mainly from the faction of Cleombrotus,<sup>205</sup> we can see how each of the intervening events would have served to lessen the chance of reproach. First, Cleombrotus' expedition was a disgraceful failure, which is likely to have decreased his, and therefore his faction's, prestige and influence

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<sup>204</sup>Agesilaus' statement in 5.4.35 that he would not refuse to fulfill the city's decision, therefore, is disingenuous, even if spoken as a witticism (see Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 289). Interestingly, in the *Agesilaus* (7.1) Xenophon extolls Agesilaus in that when he thought that something would help his country, he shirked no toil, avoided no danger and used neither bodily infirmity *nor old age* as an excuse. Xenophon does not report on Agesilaus' avoidance of the Boeotian campaign in the *Agesilaus* for obvious reasons.

<sup>205</sup>This assumption is a fairly obvious one since Xenophon tells us that at this time there were three political factions in Sparta, that of Cleombrotus, that of Agesilaus and a "middle faction" (οἱ διὰ μέσου, 5.4.25). The very name of the middle faction suggests that it was less hostile to the other two factions than they were to each other. Furthermore, Cleombrotus, judging from his lacklustre performance in Boeotia, was less than enthusiastic about prosecuting this war. In this he seems to be following the policies of his recent Agiad forbears Agesipolis and especially Pausanias, who were less aggressive and imperialistic than their Eurypontid counterparts, especially Agesilaus. Hamilton, "Thebes and Sparta," 255, writes, "If there is any doubt about Cleombrotus' opposition to the expedition against Thebes, his brief stay and failure to engage the Thebans in battle... should prove that the idea of the expedition was primarily Agesilaus'."



in Sparta. But more importantly, Agesilaus' acquittal of Sphodrias must have gone a long way toward reconciling the opposing parties of the two kings. Thus in 388, Agesilaus was free to lead a Boeotian expedition with little fear of criticism.<sup>206</sup> The upshot is that Agesilaus was not hesitant to support tyrants, but was afraid to be criticized for it.

Overall Agesilaus conducted the campaign of 388 well. He first ensured that his allies held the Cithaeron pass before he even got as far as Tegea (5.4.36-37).<sup>207</sup> The campaign in Theban territory was relatively successful. Agesilaus first ravaged all the land outside the extensive ditch and stockade fortifications of the Thebans (5.4.38). He then cleverly gained entrance to the fortifications and ravaged the land right up to the city itself (5.4.41). But two items cast a shadow over Agesilaus' accomplishments. First, the Thebans conducted a successful surprise attack against the Spartans, and Agesilaus' counter attack was only

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<sup>206</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*. 235, puts forward two possibilities as to what Xenophon was suggesting by his portrayal of Agesilaus' change of heart with respect to Boeotia: either Cleombrotus' failure allowed Agesilaus to strengthen his grip on the direction of Spartan foreign policy or a year later Sparta's incursion into Boeotia would not seem as closely related to friendship toward tyrants. Dillery's first suggestion has some merit, though it is somewhat vaguely stated, but his second does not take into account Xenophon's own narrative of intervening events.

<sup>207</sup>Cleombrotus had not been so farsighted in 389 and so was forced to fight a battle--albeit an easy one--to win the pass. In 386 he was not as fortunate and was not able to force the pass (5.4.59). Mark H. Munn, "Agesilaus' Boeotian Campaigns and the Theban Stockade of 378-377 B. C.," *Cl. Ant.* 6 (1987): 106-137, says about Cleombrotus' repulse in 376, "Xenophon implies that Kleombrotus failed because he lacked the foresight of Agesilaos, who had secured the passes before arriving at Kethairon" (p.137).



effective because the Thebans acted like drunkards (5.4.39-40).<sup>208</sup> Second, Agesilaus left Phoebidas in charge of the garrison at Thespieae after he himself went back to Sparta (5.4.41). The choice of Phoebidas indicates that Agesilaus had not repented of his support for the unjust seizure of the Cadmea, and is yet another evidence of Agesilaus' inability to choose his officers wisely. Phoebidas' command of the city which was the main base of operations against Boeotia no doubt served to reinforce in the minds of the Thebans the reality that their case against Sparta was just, with all the extra encouragement that this would entail. In the end the rashness of Phoebidas proved his undoing, for he was caught and killed with two or three others, apparently much too far forward in the pursuit of the Boeotians.<sup>209</sup> This precipitated a disgraceful rout of the entire army of Spartan allies (5.4.45) and rekindled Theban enthusiasm (5.4.46).

Agesilaus' campaign the following year was fairly successful. By a ruse reminiscent of that he had previously used against Tissaphernes in Asia he got behind the Theban stockade before the Thebans could prevent

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<sup>208</sup>Munn, *ibid.*, 108, clearly exaggerates when he states, "Indeed, the opportunity to praise the generalship of Agesilaos in these campaigns seems to have been the sole criterion used by Xenophon in selecting episodes for narration whenever the king himself was in the field."

<sup>209</sup>Xenophon emphasizes the hastiness of Phoebidas in 5.4.43: he pressed the attack *θρασέως*; he went on ahead with only the peltasts, telling the hoplites to follow; rather than letting the disheartened Thebans withdraw unmolested he expected (*ἐν ἐλπίδι*) that he could rout them; he himself led his forces *ἐρρωμένως*. Tuplin, I believe, misses the point when he asserts that Phoebidas was defeated "by a combination of topographical misfortune... and Thespian hoplite inadequacy" (*Failings of Empire*, 129).





it. Agesilaus then ravaged the land east of the city as far as the territory of Tanagra (5.4.48-49). When he came upon the Thebans arrayed against him on a hill he employed another ruse, which seemed a particularly fine one, for, from a distance he caused his enemies to retreat at a run (5.4.51). Yet Xenophon also reveals certain problems with the ruse: the Sciritans lost some men to Theban missiles, and a counter-attack by the Thebans allowed them enough of a pretext to raise a trophy (5.4.52-53).<sup>210</sup> The campaign ended with another minor victory for the Spartans (5.4.54).

Agesilaus had one more personal success before his return to Sparta, for he reconciled the two warring factions of the citizens of Thespieae (5.4.55). Two items, however, prevent us from viewing this reconciliation as entirely satisfactory for the Spartans. First, Xenophon describes the pro-Spartan party as “those claiming to be pro-Spartan” (οἱ φάσκοντες λακωνίζειν). Second, he says that Agesilaus reconciled the two parties and “compelled them” (ἀναγκάζω) to swear oaths to one another. So by his language, Xenophon calls into question both the loyalty of the citizens to Sparta<sup>211</sup> and the stability of Agesilaus’ political settlement.

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<sup>210</sup>This passage (5.4.51-54) has a remarkable seesaw structure employing μέντοι and ὅμως in an alternating pattern. There are three successive μέντοι... ὅμως arrangements and then a final μέντοι to bring the structure full circle. Xenophon seems to have used structure to emphasize that the success of Agesilaus’ strategem was in fact quite mixed.

<sup>211</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 128, note 7, offers a number of possible explanations for Xenophon’s qualification concerning the pro-Spartan faction. None seems preferable to the view I have put forward.



Moreover, to compel compliance is in the character of the tyrant, not a noble king (see *Oec.* 21.11-12).

Xenophon seems to suggest that Agesilaus' two Theban campaigns were quite successful: after the withdrawal of Agesilaus in 377, the Thebans were in dire straits because of their lack of grain, since they had not been able to get a crop in for the last two years (5.4.56). As it turns out, however, Agesilaus' efforts were futile, for by the ill-discipline of Alcetas, the harmost of Oreus, the Boeotians were able to import all the grain they needed (5.4.56-7). Now we cannot blame Agesilaus for the carelessness of Alcetas, but Xenophon clearly shows that Agesilaus' efforts, though peppered with intelligence, energy and wisdom, were ultimately ineffectual. He simply was not able to achieve a direct, decisive victory over the enemies of Sparta.

A ruptured vein kept Agesilaus out of service for some time (5.4.58). At the peace negotiations at Sparta in 371 (6.3.19), he took his characteristic anti-Theban stance. At the conclusion of the conference, the Spartans took an oath on behalf of themselves and their allies, and the Athenians and each of their allies swore the oath individually. The Thebans, however, swore on their own behalf but then came back demanding that the oath should read that they swore on behalf of the Boeotians. Agesilaus refused the request and threatened to strike out their names altogether. And this he apparently did. Now it might be argued that Agesilaus in this episode was simply standing up for the principle of autonomy. But in view of his past relationship to Thebes,



this is unlikely; his precipitous actions in a strikingly similar situation in 387 were motivated by “personal enmity against the Thebans” and there is no reason to think that his motivation was any different now. Agesilaus’ approach was hypocritical because Sparta had signed on behalf of her allies and equal treatment would require that the Thebans be allowed to sign on behalf of their fellow-Boeotians.<sup>212</sup> It was also foolhardy because the natural corollary to Agesilaus’ exclusion of the Thebans was the renewed war against Thebes which culminated in the devastating Spartan loss at the battle of Leuctra.<sup>213</sup>

Agesilaus finally took to the field again in 370 when he led a Spartan expedition against the Arcadian League. He seems now to be a different sort of military commander than before. His illness, which Xenophon records with significant medical detail highlighting its severity (5.4.58), appears to have left him diminished in courage and spirit. Now he seems to embody more clearly than ever before the character of the Spartan state. Just as he had sustained a serious physical setback, so his state had suffered a decisive military setback at Leuctra, and now both city and king were weakened and displayed a timidity which

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<sup>212</sup>Xenophon, of course, does not make the issue nearly so blatant as Plutarch does in his description of the confrontation between Epaminondas and Agesilaus (*Ages.* 27.3-28.2) at the peace conference of 371, but the implication is present nonetheless.

<sup>213</sup> “Agesilaus’ behavior at the peace conference and in its immediate sequel leaves no room for doubt about his role in bringing on the final crisis with Thebes.” Hamilton, “Thebes and Sparta,” 257. The sequel to which Hamilton refers is Agesilaus’ part in opposing the wise and more pacific advice of Prothous (Plutarch, *Ages.* 28.4). Although Xenophon does not explicitly say that Agesilaus was behind the opposition to Prothous, it is not at all difficult to infer as much from the narrative (6.4.2-3).





reflected this weakness.

In the political atmosphere of 370, the Mantineans thought that it was possible and well within their rights as an independent state to reunify their city and rebuild its walls.<sup>214</sup> This vexed the Lacedaemonians, who sent Agesilaus to Mantinea as ambassador. The Mantinean leaders, however, refused to let Agesilaus address the Demos and insisted that he speak to them alone. He promised them that if they would hold off on building the walls, he would arrange it so that their objective could be accomplished with the approval of the Spartans and with no great expense to themselves (6.5.4). The Mantineans rejected even this mild demand, and Agesilaus went away angry. The weakness of Sparta is clear from this episode. Agesilaus did not insist that they stop their plan, but only that they put it off and let the Spartans work together on it with them. When the Mantineans refused, Agesilaus did not think it possible to make war against them because the peace had been made on the basis of autonomy (6.5.5). This is in stark contrast to Sparta's aggressive approach toward Mantinea in the immediate aftermath of the King's Peace in 386 (5.2.1-7).

When Mantinean intrigues forced Sparta's hand, the Spartans declared war and asked Agesilaus to take the lead (6.5.6-10). This

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<sup>214</sup>The King's peace had just recently been renewed, but now with Athens, not Sparta acting as the guarantor (along with the Persian King) of the peace (6.5.2).





campaign was marked by real timidity on the part of Agesilaus.<sup>215</sup> He marched against Arcadia, took the small border town of Eutaia and was content to remain here at the border, waiting for a body of mercenaries which the allied Orchomenians had hired (6.5.12). He finally marched forward without this force when news came that they had suffered a defeat at the hands of the Mantineans (6.5.13-14). Some tried to persuade Agesilaus to attack a detachment of Arcadians who wanted to join up with the Mantineans, but Agesilaus “fearing (φοβούμενος) lest the Mantineans from the city come out and fall upon him on the flank or from the rear,” insisted that it was best to let the Arcadians join with the Mantineans (6.5.16). A number of things suggest that this decision was motivated by timidity rather than prudence. Xenophon says that the Arcadians wanted to join forces with the Mantineans because the Argives accompanying them were “not in full force” (οὐ πανδημεῖ). In other words, the Arcadians themselves did not consider that they had sufficient numbers to successfully face Agesilaus. Furthermore, Agesilaus advised that the Arcadians be allowed to join forces and then, “if they wished to fight” he would fight them in a straightforward and open manner. Agesilaus’ conditional language indicates that he did not want to fight his enemies even after they had consolidated. When a force approached the Spartan army at dawn it caused a general panic: the soldiers ran to get into order and Agesilaus discontinued the sacrifices and retreated

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<sup>215</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 141-2.



into the camp. It was then discovered that this was an allied force (6.5.17). In the evening Agesilaus secretly moved position to a valley close behind the city of Mantinea. The next morning, as he was conducting the sacrifices before the camp, he noticed the enemy from the city gathering in the heights above his rear and realized that he had to get out of the valley by the quickest route. “But he was afraid (ἐφοβεῖτο) that if he himself should lead out, the enemy would fall on his rear.” He managed by a skilful manoeuvre to extricate himself safely from the valley (6.5.18-19). In this campaign, Agesilaus displayed justice, piety and some tactical skill, but his actions were largely dominated by fear.

Agesilaus’ withdrawal reinforces this impression of fear. He seemed pleased that the Arcadians did not attack him after his withdrawal from the valley for “he wanted very much to lead the army away.” Yet he stayed on the spot for another three days, “in order that they might not think he was eager to withdraw out of fear” (φοβούμενος, 6.5.20). When no Arcadians opposed his withdrawal, he led the army away by the quickest route possible, even though it was very late, because he did not want his hoplites to see the fires of the enemy “so that no one might say that in the withdrawal he was fleeing (φεύγων).” Agesilaus’ concern that neither his enemies nor his army think that he was acting out of fear, merely reinforces the impression of his fear. Xenophon summarizes the campaign: “He seemed to have lifted the city from its previous discouragement, because he had made an incursion



into Arcadia and no one wished to attack him as he ravaged the land” (6.5.21). Yet the narrative itself indicates that Agesilaus was at least as hesitant to fight as his enemies were. Moreover, that such a poor campaign should encourage the Spartans points up how far their estate--and Agesilaus’--had fallen.

The impression of this campaign given in the *Agesilaus* (1.23) is much more positive. There Agesilaus took to the field against the members of the Arcadian League “although many thought the Lacedaemonians would not come out from their own territory for a long time [after Leuctra].” Xenophon avoids relating the details of the campaign, but summarizes it: “Having devastated the country of those who had killed his friends, thus he returned home again.” The *Agesilaus* also records the king’s activities in the subsequent defense of Sparta itself. It says that in spite of the great odds against Sparta, Agesilaus kept the city safe by the astute and disciplined stationing of his forces (2.24). The *Hellenica*, on the other hand, does not mention the king at all in the record of the defense of the city. In fact, the narrative after Agesilaus’ withdrawal from Arcadia gives the impression that his invasion of Arcadia was wholly ineffective. The Arcadians were not the least cowed by the invasion, for they immediately attacked the Heraeans, who had fought on the Spartan side, and ravaged their land (6.5.22). Moreover, the Arcadians had now become convinced of Sparta’s weakness, for when the Thebans arrived and showed some hesitance to invade Sparta, the Arcadians insisted that Laconia would make an easy





target of aggression through its paucity of defenders (6.5.23).<sup>216</sup> That Agesilaus is never mentioned in the brave and generally successful defense of Sparta reinforces the impression of the ineffectiveness of his efforts at this point in his career.

We find Agesilaus for the last time in the *Hellenica* at 7.5.9-10. In the campaign of 362 Epaminondas had advanced as far as Tegea. His enemies, who were stationed at Mantinea, had sent for Agesilaus, who was now at Pellene, leaving Sparta quite defenseless. Epaminondas quickly made for the city and would have taken it “if a Cretan by some divine fate (θεία τινί μοίρᾳ) had not come up and announced to Agesilaus that the army was approaching.” With this advance notice, Agesilaus made it back to the city before Epaminondas, and the city was preserved. Xenophon chose to omit Agesilaus’ part in the defense of the city, for he records that it was the Spartiates, not Agesilaus, who ordered the defense of the city (7.5.10). We hear nothing of the king, though Plutarch reports that his exploits in the city’s defense were vigorous and daring (*Ages.* 34.4-5). So in the last appearance of Agesilaus in the *Hellenica* he seems little more than a pawn of fate. The divine had ordained, Xenophon thought, that no clear *hegemon* should emerge at this point in Greek history (see 7.5.12,13,26). Agesilaus, who had had

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<sup>216</sup>The Arcadians were clearly not exaggerating the Spartan weakness in order to induce the Thebans to attack. Xenophon writes that they “understood” the fewness of the men in Laconia (συνιδόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι ἑρημίαν...6.5.23). Later he says of the defenders of Sparta, “They were very few in both reality and appearance” (μάλα ὀλίγοι καὶ ὄντες καὶ φαινόμενοι, 6.5.28).



such great potential and opportunity to lead Sparta to unquestioned hegemony was in the end only able to save her from complete destruction by the intervention of the divine, fitting though this was for one who had consistently shown high regard for the gods.

### **Summary**

Taken together Lysander and Agesilaus represent the military success and the political failure of Sparta; by the efforts of her two most prominent sons, she won the struggle with Athens but lost the bid to establish a just hegemony. The military skill and discipline of Lysander was able to win the war, but his ambition got the better of him, caused him to balk (however covertly) at the limits imposed upon him by Spartan law, and brought him into continual conflict with the established authorities of the state. In the end, an irrational impulse drove out his characteristic discretion and brought about his death and a major setback for the establishment of Spartan hegemony outside the Peloponnese. Agesilaus seemed to have qualities which were lacking in Lysander, most notably piety and obedience to the established laws, characteristics which should have qualified him to bring order and justice to the troubled political landscape of Greece. He even held the hope of bringing the Persian throne, which had so often been a destabilizing force in Greek politics, under the the authority of Sparta. Yet a narrowness of vision hobbled him. He occupied himself with gratifying friends, allies and subordinates in various minor ways, while



neglecting the discipline of his army; he won much booty and many battles, but seemed incapable of taking major cities and unable to appreciate the growing significance of light-armed soldiery; petty jealousy and bitterness often compelled him to support injustice and oppression. And so Sparta lost her hegemony and was reduced to a petty state fighting for her very survival in the storms of Greek inter-state conflict.



CHAPTER THREE  
A THESSALIAN AND A THEBAN

**Introduction**

With the seizure of the Cadmea, the fate of Sparta was sealed (5.4.1); she would lose her hegemony to the state she had wronged. From this point on Xenophon traces the rise of Thebes, albeit not very systematically. His concern is to explore whether or not Thebes, under the leadership of Pelopidas and especially Epaminondas, would be capable of bringing a stable hegemony to Greece. But he also makes a pair of digressions to explore the situation in Thessaly and the rise and sudden fall of Jason. These digressions, however, are not tangential to Xenophon's overall purpose in the *Hellenica*, for in them he is identifying another contender for hegemony and thus another possible source of order in Greece. In the end, just like the leaders of Athens and Sparta before them, neither Jason nor Epaminondas is successful in making their states politically dominant, in spite of their impressive personal qualities. And much more clearly than with earlier Greek leaders, Xenophon attributes the failure of Jason and Epaminondas to the activity of the divine.

**Jason of Pherae**

That some scholars hold Xenophon's Jason as an exemplar of





virtue<sup>1</sup> and others as highly sinister,<sup>2</sup> suggests he is an ambiguous character if viewed from a too narrowly “moral” point of view. Xenophon rather seems interested in Jason mainly for the role he plays in the quest for hegemony and stable government in Greece, for he portrays him as a very great man who has the potential to bring all Greece under his sway. He emphasizes Jason’s greatness from the speech of Polydamas (6.1.4-16), which introduces Jason to the *Hellenica*, right up to his final comments about him just before his death (6.4.31), portraying him as a vigorous, powerful, disciplined, diplomatic, and ambitious ruler. But Jason, like all other Greek leaders, falls short of his potential,<sup>3</sup> mainly because he fails to take into account his own dictum that “the god often rejoices to make the great small and the small great” (6.4.23).

Xenophon introduces Jason not directly but through the speech of

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<sup>1</sup>Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons*, 60, says that Jason is a *Musterbeispiel* of self-discipline, the most important characteristic of a Xenophontic leader. See also pp. 62, 73 and 75-6. Bodil Due, *The Cyropaedia: Xenophon's Aims and Methods* (Aarhus and Copenhagen: Aarhus University Press, 1989), 187, asserts that Jason “is the closest and most elaborate parallel to Cyrus [the Great] in the *Hellenica*.” Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 26, emphasizes the Socratic nature of Xenophon’s heroes, among whom is Jason. See also Westlake, “Individuals,” 253-4 and P. Krafft, “Vier Beispiele des Xenophontischen in Xenophons *Hellenica*,” *RhM* 110 (1967): 107-33.

<sup>2</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 110, characterizes Xenophon’s Jason as “the most cunning tyrant of all” and asserts that he is particularly dangerous because “he possesses, as it were, all the virtues, but is still immoral.” James Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: On The Education of Cyrus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 48, believes that Jason was particularly lacking in self-restraint, especially in his failure to understand the limits of power, and that Xenophon’s account of Jason’s end shows the author’s “satisfaction” at his reversal of fortune. Dillery, *History of His Times*, 171-6, especially 174, and Pownall, “Condemnation of the Impious,” 267, highlight his impiety and excessive desire for power.

<sup>3</sup>“Jason’s failure [is] one aspect of the persistent failure to impose order on the Greek world after the fall of Sparta.” Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 120.



Polydamas, the leading citizen of Pharsalus, who came to Sparta requesting help against Jason (6.1.4-16). This speech, which focusses almost exclusively on the character of Jason, is quite long and detailed. The literary complexity of this character sketch of Jason is further enhanced by Polydamas' penchant for quoting Jason's own words.<sup>4</sup> Xenophon likely used so elaborate a method to trace the personality of Jason because the character of Polydamas itself was of some interest to him. That he prefaces Polydamas' speech with a brief account of the speaker's own personal qualities (6.1.2-3) reinforces this impression.

Xenophon presents Polydamas as a scrupulously upright man. He had a very good reputation in the rest of Thessaly, Xenophon tells us, and his own city considered him such a noble person (καλός τε κάγαθός) that when factional strife arose, the citizens entrusted to him the acropolis and control of state revenues (6.1.2).<sup>5</sup> Polydamas used the revenues to keep the acropolis safe and to administer government affairs, and every year gave a proper account of the funds. He was so scrupulous

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<sup>4</sup>Westlake, "Individuals," 249,253 and Dillery, *History of His Times*, 171, note how unusual Xenophon's method of introducing Jason is.

<sup>5</sup>H. D. Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century B. C.* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis N. V., 1969), 77, cites the reference in Aristotle (*Pol.* 1306a) to a μεσιδίου ἄρχων who was appointed in a similar crisis by the citizens of Larisa. Westlake decides, however, that it is more likely that Polydamas was "appointed by Sparta and forced upon the Pharsalian populace." If Westlake is correct, Xenophon misrepresents the position of this Pharsalian leader in order to highlight his personal virtues and political accomplishments. Yet the parallel with the Larisian μεσιδίου ἄρχων is striking and we should probably give Xenophon the benefit of a doubt with regard to Polydamas' position at Pharsalus. Moreover, Westlake attributes Xenophon's supposed misrepresentation here to his "notorious" Spartan partisanship. But, as Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 31, has shown, Xenophon does not in fact have a pro-Spartan bias as such.



that when there was a shortfall in revenue he made up for it from his own resources, and when there was an excess he paid himself back. In addition, he was hospitable and magnificent (φιλόξενος τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπής) in typical Thessalian fashion (6.1.3). His speech reveals his rectitude as well: he had come to Sparta as an ancestral friend to tell the Spartans that something contrary to their interests was happening in Thessaly (6.1.4); when Jason encouraged Polydamas to join him, the latter replied that it would be impossible for him to betray his friends, the Spartans, when they had not wronged him (6.1.13). Polydamas' response to Jason is very similar to that of Pharnabazus to Agesilaus at 4.1.37.<sup>6</sup> When the Spartans decided not to help Polydamas, he praised their forthrightness (6.1.18). His appreciation of Spartan honesty<sup>7</sup> reminds the reader of Polydamas' own honesty in the preceding speech.<sup>8</sup> When Polydamas decided to join with Jason, he entreated him not to

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<sup>6</sup>Agesilaus made an offer of alliance to Pharnabazus, which Pharnabazus rejected unless the King of Persia relieved him of his command; in other words, Pharnabazus found it impossible to betray the king so long as the king had done no wrong to him. We should note also that the response of Agesilaus to Pharnabazus' expression of faithfulness was the same as Jason's to Polydamas: each praised his interlocutor and expressed an even greater desire to be an ally to him because of his faithfulness (4.1.38; 6.1.13). See Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 54-5 who also notes the similarities between Pharnabazus and Polydamas.

<sup>7</sup>Xenophon writes, κάκεῖνος μέντοι ἐπαινέσας τὴν ἀπλότητα τῆς πόλεως ἀπῆλθε. This again links Polydamas and Pharnabazus, for when the latter began his second address to Agesilaus he said, ἀπλῶς ὑμῖν ἀποκρίνομαι ἅπερ ποιήσω; and then does indeed speak forthrightly, like Polydamas.

<sup>8</sup>Polydamas was very blunt about the power and abilities of Jason (see especially 6.1.6, 14-16), about the size and nature of the force that the Spartans must send out (6.1.14-15), and that they should not bother sending help at all unless it was of the magnitude he described (6.1.14).





compel him to hand over the acropolis of Pharsalus, “in order that I might keep it safe for those who entrusted it to me.” Here Polydamas shows himself not only faithful to his trust, but also aware that his efforts are on behalf of his fellow-citizens and not his own aggrandizement. To sum up, Polydamas kept his city in good order in the midst of the chaos of civil discord and maintained honesty and trust on the wider political scene at a time when widespread faithlessness was causing much turmoil in Greece. His most important function in the narrative seems to be to shed light on Jason’s personality by serving as a sort of contrast to it.<sup>9</sup>

Jason was clearly a figure of great importance. Polydamas said of him, “I am sure even you [Spartans] have heard the name of Jason, for the man has great power, and is famous” (6.1.4). Polydamas supported his assertion of Jason’s strength by reporting Jason’s own words on the topic: he had the greatest part of the cities--and the greatest of them--as his allies; he had six thousand mercenaries, more than any city could produce, with better physical training and endurance than any citizen army (6.1.5). Polydamas, in his own words, confirmed Jason’s strength: Jason himself was very strong and hardy; he tested his mercenaries daily, eliminating the soft and richly rewarding the hardy and brave (6.1.6). Furthermore, the surrounding peoples were subject to him

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<sup>9</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 120-1, writes, “[Xenophon] will describe... the honesty and trustworthiness of the Pharsalian Polydamas... whose own life shows up Jason’s for the fraud it is.” I will explain my own ideas on the nature of the contrast between these two Thessalians at the end of this section.



(6.1.7).

Polydamas' speech indicated that Jason had ambition to match his prodigious power. If Pharsalus and its dependencies should support him, Jason thought, he could easily become Tagos of Thessaly<sup>10</sup> which would give him a cavalry force of six thousand and more than ten thousand hoplites (6.1.8). Furthermore, all the surrounding tribes would be added to him such that Thessaly would be dominant in peltasts as well (6.1.9). Alliances were also part of Jason's ambition. He figured that all the states at war with the Spartans would be allies and follow his lead if only he freed them from Spartan domination. The Athenians would do everything they could to be an ally, so he claimed, but he did not think them worth bothering about, for a power based on the sea would be "even easier" to take than one based on land (6.1.10). He had thought out the reasons for this quite carefully: with Macedonia for ships' timber, many hardy serfs for rowers, an abundance of home-grown grain for food, and a mainland source of revenues, the Thessalians could easily outstrip the Athenians in sea-power (6.1.11-12). Xenophon presents Jason as one who had thought long and hard about political and military matters. As he explained his perspective he encouraged Polydamas three times (including here) to "reckon" (λογίζεσθαι) whether his calculations were likely to be true (6.1.5,8,11). And the narrative suggests that Polydamas did believe Jason's reckonings to be reasonable. Jason's ambitions

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<sup>10</sup>On the position of Tagos see Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century*, 25-6, 78-9.



reached even to the Great King of Persia: "I think he would be still easier to subdue than Greece."<sup>11</sup> And in this case too Jason proved himself to have given considerable thought to the enterprise: all the men in Persia except for one were trained for slavery rather than courage, and the Persian king had been very hard-pressed by the relatively small Greek armies of Cyrus and of Agesilaus (6.1.12).

We might well ask if Xenophon saw Jason's ambitions as realistic or not. Jason's personal strength and discipline and that of his army suggest that he had considerable power with which to fulfill his aspirations. Moreover, Jason's own words emphasized how carefully he had evaluated his own abilities, resources and inclinations as well as those of Thessaly, the other Greek powers and Persia. And Jason seems not to have been a baldly aggressive brute but to have had some skill in the art of politics too, for he recognized the value of winning the noble Polydamas over as an ally. Jason was very convincing too, for Polydamas followed his suggestion to send to Sparta for help, and in the end acquiesced to the alliance with Jason. In winning over Polydamas, Jason also realized his first ambition, which was to become Tagos of Thessaly (6.1.18). When he tallied up the forces at his disposal as Tagos, Xenophon reports that he had a significantly greater force than he had anticipated: eight thousand horse (instead of six) and more than twenty

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<sup>11</sup>Jason was apparently well-known to have boasted about his intention to attack the Great King. Isocrates interestingly associates the greatness of Jason with this boast (5.119-20). In urging Philip to attack the king of Persia, he points to the example of Jason: "He obtained the greatest reputation, not by what he did, but by what he said; he used to say that he would cross over to the continent and make war on the king."



thousand hoplites (instead of ten) and in addition a force of peltasts large enough to stand against all mankind (6.1.19). So by the end of this passage, Jason has already begun to realize his ambitions in an even bigger way than he expected.

At the same time, however, certain aspects of Jason's ambition make us doubt his ability to realize them. His earlier aspirations--to become Tagos and take the leadership of the anti-Spartan coalition--seem quite attainable. When he speaks of Athens, however, he seems ominously smug. He refers to the "little islands" (νησούδρια) on which Athenian power is based (6.1.12). Had he forgotten how formidable Athens' earlier empire had become by exploiting the resources of islands? Furthermore, his judgement that the serfs of Thessaly would prove effective sailors simply because they are sturdy and numerous comes across as a bit facile. His treatment of Persia was equally glib. To state that all the Persians except the king were characteristically slavish may reflect a widespread Greek prejudice, but it does not accord very well with much of Xenophon's account of the Persians, most notably in the character and actions of Pharnabazus.<sup>12</sup> It is also highly questionable that the Greeks with Cyrus and those under Agesilaus brought the

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<sup>12</sup>Other Persians who proved themselves militarily effective are Tithraustes (3.5.1-2) and Struthas (4.8.18-19).





Persians to the great extremity that Jason suggests.<sup>13</sup> Jason revealed his scorn most clearly in his repetition of the expression “still easier”: now it was not the Athenians, but the Persians who would be still easier to overcome than Greece.<sup>14</sup>

The question about Jason that confronts us at this point in the narrative is whether he will be able to conquer Greece and hold sway over its diverse states and perhaps even overcome the Great King himself and rule over his vast domains. Jason’s great attributes suggest that the answer to this question may be affirmative, but his smug attitude gives us pause.

Jason next appears in the *Hellenica* at 6.4.20, where Xenophon shows further examples of his military and diplomatic prowess. After Leuctra, the Boeotians were keen to finish off the defeated Spartans, and so turned to Jason for help. He manned a force of triremes, either as a feint to throw off the Phocians,<sup>15</sup> or in earnest to support his land troops,<sup>16</sup> and then went quickly by land accompanied by his mercenaries

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<sup>13</sup>In Xenophon’s own account of the march of the Ten Thousand, the Greeks were for the most part trying to escape the Great King--and had a hard time of it at that. Agesilaus, according to the *Hellenica*, had little success in striking at the heart of the Persian empire, though he did have some short-term successes on the Western fringes of his empire.

<sup>14</sup>Note also his use of *παδίως* at 6.1.5 and 6.1.7.

<sup>15</sup>F. W. Mitchell, “The Rasura of IG ii2 43: Jason, the Pheraean *demos* and the Athenian League,” *AncW* 9 (1984): 54.

<sup>16</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 118, note 48.



and his personal force of cavalry. The sending of the triremes either points up his cleverness in using a ruse to put the Phocians off their guard or his strength that he was able to marshall forces both by land and sea. His movements were so swift that he passed through the territory of the Phocians unimpeded though they were at war with Jason. Xenophon admires this alacrity, for he writes that by this march Jason “made it clear that swiftness often accomplishes what needs to be done more than force” (6.4.21). Though Jason had sufficient strength to push through Phocis by brute force, he also had the intelligence and discipline to use speed when that served his purpose better.

When Jason arrived in Boeotia, the Thebans insisted that it was the right time to attack the Spartans. But he convinced them to refrain, arguing that, though a second battle might result in an even greater victory, a loss would erase the victory they had already achieved (6.4.22), and that the present straits of the Lacedaimonians would compel them to fight all the more desperately. “And the god, so it seems, often rejoices to make the small great and the great small” (6.4.23).<sup>17</sup> It is unlikely that Jason made this last statement out of sincere religious conviction, but rather to add weight to his argument. Had he been completely sincere, we should expect this belief to have exercised some check on his own enormous ambition.

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<sup>17</sup> This is, as Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 163, states, “a most Herodotean piece of philosophy.” The closest Herodotean parallel is perhaps the statement of Artabanus, who, in advising Xerxes to refrain from a hasty attack on the Greeks, says, φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν (7.10ε). See also *An.* 3.2.10.



Jason then convinced the Spartans not to attack the Thebans in the attempt to make up for their recent defeat. He taught them what a defeated army is like and what a victorious army is like, presumably that the former is demoralized and will fight poorly, while the latter is confident and will therefore fight well. He counselled them to rest up in order to be better prepared to attack “those who are undefeated.” This last expression seems to contain a barb. The Spartans traditionally prided themselves on being the undefeated and now Jason was applying the term to the Thebans. The main intent of the reference, though, was no doubt to discourage the Spartans from attacking the Thebans by reinforcing in their minds how formidable the enemy was. The advice he gave to the Spartans appears to be based on a premise nearly opposite to that on which he based his advice to the Boeotians, for to the latter he emphasized how effective a desperate army can be, but to the former he highlighted how formidable a victorious army can be. Jason tried to convince the Spartans that his counsel to them arose purely out of concern for their preservation, pointing to the friendship of his father toward Sparta and to his own role as a *proxenos* of the Spartans in Pherae (6.4.24). The sentiments here expressed by Jason are clearly disingenuous, for earlier Xenophon presented Jason as wanting to lead all the enemies of Sparta against her (6.1.10). His brazenness is emphasized by the fact that he apparently had been planning to destroy the Spartan state while at the same time functioning as her agent in Pherae. Xenophon then lays bare his hypocrisy: “On the one hand he





was saying such things, but on the other, he was of course working so that in their enmity with each other both [Thebes and Sparta] might be dependent on him" (6.1.25).<sup>18</sup>

But though his arguments were self-serving, they were very persuasive. Just as formerly he had convinced Polydamas to join him, so now he first convinced the Thebans not to attack the Spartans, and then so thoroughly persuaded the Spartans that they were not only willing to sue for peace, but also urged Jason to negotiate a truce on their behalf (6.1.25).

On his way back to Thessaly, Jason destroyed the fortifications of Heraclea, a city on the southern border of Thessaly controlled by the Spartans.<sup>19</sup> He did this, Xenophon explains, not for defensive purposes, but because he wanted to be free to march wherever he wished in Greece, and feared that if others held Heraclea and the narrow pass it controlled they might hinder his movements (6.4.27). This act advanced Jason's goal to control the whole of Greece.

Xenophon now provides a summary statement of Jason's

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<sup>18</sup>In this approach he was acting much like the King of Persia whose policy toward the Greeks since 412 had generally been to keep both Greek powers viable and at enmity in order to check their strength and keep them dependent on Persian money. See Thuc. 8.48 for the origin of this policy.

<sup>19</sup>See Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century*, 70, 95. A force of Heracleiot cavalry fought on the Spartan side at Leuctra (6.4.9).



greatness.<sup>20</sup> He was great because he was appointed Tagos of Thessaly and because of his numerous and superbly trained mercenary force of infantry and cavalry. He was greater still because of his many allies, those who were already such and those who wanted to be. He was the greatest of all his contemporaries because he was despised by no one (6.4.28). Jason in other words, had great potential to fulfill his massive ambition of ruling Greece and beyond. Xenophon here may well be exaggerating the greatness of Jason, “for he invests [Jason] with an importance not elsewhere attested.”<sup>21</sup> The magnification of his importance is probably due to Xenophon’s desire to make Jason a prime example of his own words that “the god often delights to make the great small and the small great;”<sup>22</sup> that is, his surpassing greatness makes him a prime candidate indeed for divine humbling.

Before Xenophon treats the assassination of Jason, he records the activities of Jason relating to the Pythian festival. Jason ordered all the cities under his control to prepare sacrifices for the festival (6.4.29). While these preparations were going on, he also ordered the Thessalians to make ready for war (6.4.30). It was said that he had in mind to direct the festival and the games personally. But the Delphians also feared for

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<sup>20</sup>“Xenophon underscores the extent of Jason’s power in a carefully constructed triadic structure.” Dillery, *History of His Times*, 173.

<sup>21</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 171.

<sup>22</sup>See Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 119-20.



the sacred treasure. Xenophon does not make it clear whether Jason intended to seize the treasure or not. It appears that Xenophon wishes to imply that divine nemesis was involved in the downfall of Jason. The structure of the two critical statements of 6.4.30 indicate this. In the first Xenophon says, "What he intended concerning the sacred treasures, however, is still to this day unclear." The next statement is contrasted with the first by a μέν... δέ construction. "But it is said that when the Delphians asked what they should do if he should seize the treasures of the god, the god replied that he would look after it."<sup>23</sup> The impression the reader might receive is that though Jason's intention for the treasure were from a human standpoint unclear, the god knew what they were and would deal with him for it. The portrayal of Jason, therefore, is perhaps similar to that of Alcibiades in that Xenophon seems to have implied that Alcibiades' act of impiety on the day of Plynteria was somehow significant for his eventual fall from power.<sup>24</sup> Yet at the same time Xenophon explicitly states that Jason's intentions were unclear (ἄδηλον). It is therefore also uncertain if Xenophon attributes the

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<sup>23</sup>The account here is reminiscent of that recorded by Herodotus in 8.36, when the Phocians asked the god if they should remove the sacred treasure at Delphi in response to the approach of Xerxes who, Herodotus tells us, clearly had his eye on the treasure. Apollo said that he was able to defend his own. If Xenophon depends on this Herodotean account for his own account of Jason and Delphi, then he implies that Jason was after the treasure. Yet Xenophon makes no effort to craft his story so as to bring out the connection with Herodotus. The two stories are similar only in their most basic structure, not at all in the details, and Xenophon makes no effort to verbally assimilate his account to that of Herodotus: Herodotus writes, ὁ δὲ θεὸς σφεας οὐκ ἔα κινέειν, φὰς αὐτὸς ἱκανὸς εἶναι τῶν ἐωυτοῦ προκατήσθαι; Xenophon writes, ἀποκρίνεσθαι τὸν θεὸν ὅτι αὐτῷ μελήσει.

<sup>24</sup>See Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 262.



sudden destruction of Jason which followed the Delphi episode to the punishment of the god for Jason's intended impiety or not.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of the focus on religious matters in 6.4.29-30, the overall emphasis of the narrative remains on the greatness of Jason. When Xenophon reports on Jason's sacrificial preparations he says that though each city had a very moderate requirement for animals placed on it, the cattle still numbered no less than a thousand and the other animals more than ten thousand (6.4.29). This statement therefore emphasizes the great number of cities belonging to Jason.<sup>26</sup> When Xenophon begins his account of the actual death of Jason, he also puts it in the context of Jason's greatness: "Therefore this man, being so great and having so many great ambitions... was cut down and slain" (6.4.31). Therefore, just before the report of Jason's death Xenophon emphasizes two things: the greatness of Jason and the action of the god. The focus, then, is on the greatness of Jason as the reason for the god's action against him in direct--and ironic--fulfillment of Jason's earlier statement to the Thebans. Thus Jason becomes another example of a leader whose great potential is suddenly cut short according to the divine will which

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<sup>25</sup>Pownall, "Condemnation of the Impious," 267, writes, "By including a full description of his assassination immediately after speculation upon his impiety, however, Xenophon strongly hints that Jason's alleged intended sacrilege regarding the sacred treasures at Delphi played a role in his untimely death." Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 120, on the contrary minimizes the connection between Jason's impiety and his death, though he does say that "there is a sense in which divine ordinance, if not divine justice" was involved in his downfall.

<sup>26</sup>Compare 6.1.19: After Xenophon enumerates the forces at the disposal of Jason because of his position as Tagos, he says ἔργον γὰρ ἐκείνων γε καὶ τὰς πόλεις ἀριθμῆσαι.





prevents any Greek power from gaining clear dominance (see 7.5.26).

Xenophon's account of Jason's death and its aftermath also suggests something about the character of the man. On the occasion of his death Xenophon tells us that Jason had just finished holding an inspection of the Pheraean cavalry. This is typical of Jason, always showing concern for the readiness of his troops.<sup>27</sup> Then, while responding to those coming to him with their requests, he was killed by seven young men. Jason's bodyguard killed two of the assassins but the rest escaped. These men were honoured in most of the Greek cities to which they fled, Xenophon reports, showing that the Greeks greatly feared that Jason would become a tyrant (6.4.32). By this last comment, Xenophon raises the question as to whether or not Jason was a tyrant. And just as with the suggested Delphic impiety, he does not make his view on the matter explicit.

We get the most succinct expression of Xenophon's view of tyranny in *Mem.* 4.6.12, where Socrates says that tyranny is rule over unwilling subjects (ἄκοντες), not according to the laws of the state (μὴ κατὰ νόμους) but by the will of the ruler (ὅπως ὁ ἄρχων βούλοιτο). In this light, there is much to suggest that Jason was not a tyrant. His position as Tagos was quite clearly a constitutional one, and Jason exhibited a keen desire to attain power in Thessaly through this legitimate office. He was quite concerned, for example, that Polydamas help him to get appointed Tagos,

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<sup>27</sup>Compare Xenophon's admiration of Iphicrates for the same quality in 6.2.27-30.



and carefully enumerated the military and economic resources that would be his as Tagos (6.1.8-9,12). When Jason was appointed Tagos, it was “by common consent” (ὁμολογουμένως, 6.1.18). He also appeared quite concerned to win allies not by the tyrant’s method of compulsion (see *Oec.* 21.12), but by drawing them in willingly. He pointed out to Polydamas that he could easily subjugate Pharsalus by force (ἄκων, 6.1.5), but “I think it is better in every way to win you over willing rather than unwilling” (ἐκόντας ὑμᾶς μᾶλλον ἢ ἄκοντας; 6.1.7). Moreover, when Polydamas replied to Jason that he would not abandon his longstanding friendship with the Spartans, Jason expressed admiration for Polydamas’ fidelity and wanted him all the more for his own ally (6.1.13). This makes Jason very unlike the typical tyrant, for according to the *Hiero* (5.1), though the tyrant is able to recognize nobility in others, he must fear it and put any possessor of it out of the way. Also, Jason evidently did not force Polydamas to give up control of the acropolis of Pharsalus (6.1.18). Finally, when Jason ordered sacrifices from each city under his control, his requirements were “very moderate” (6.4.29)--hardly what we would expect from a tyrant.

On the other hand, some elements of Xenophon’s narrative suggest that Jason was indeed tyrannical. Though Jason won Polydamas and others by persuasion rather than by force, his methods were largely coercive. He offered Polydamas second place in Greece (6.1.8), but also issued an ultimatum: either join with me or be conquered (6.1.13).



Jason exhibited the character of a tyrant too in his excessive dependence on mercenaries. Xenophon's Hiero was entirely dependent on his mercenaries: he was forced to make foreign mercenaries more formidable than his own citizens (5.2) and to trust them more than citizens, using them as bodyguards (6.3); he stated that it was absolutely essential for a tyrant to have mercenaries (8.10). Mercenaries were required, of course, to protect the tyrant from his unwilling subjects and to enforce the unpopular will of the ruler. Jason, though not exclusively fixated on foreign mercenaries (see *Hell.* 6.1.8-9,19), nevertheless depended on them much more heavily than on his citizen armies, subject nations or allies: he deemed the military prowess of his foreign mercenaries greater than citizen armies (6.1.5); he paid very close attention to the training and rewarding of his mercenaries (6.1.6); when he rushed to Boeotia at the request of Thebes he took only his mercenaries and personal cavalry force (6.4.21); in summarizing the greatness of Jason, Xenophon emphasizes much more the mercenary aspect of his power than the civil (6.4.28);<sup>28</sup> at Jason's assassination, in good tyrannic form, he had mercenary bodyguards who jumped to his aid, albeit ineffectively (6.4.32). In addition, the fact that the assassins of Jason were honoured as tyrant-slayers in most (though, significantly, not all) of the Greek cities (6.1.32) suggests that Jason was indeed a tyrant, for Hiero says that instead of

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<sup>28</sup>In referring to his greatness as Tagos, Xenophon says simply that he was great διὰ τὸ τῷ νόμῳ Θετταλῶν ταγὸς καθεστάναι. In referring to his greatness based on his mercenaries, Xenophon says that Jason was great διὰ τὸ μισθοφόρους πολλοὺς τρέφειν περὶ αὐτὸν καὶ πεζοὺς καὶ ἱππέας, καὶ τούτους ἐκπεπονημένους ὥς ἂν κράτιστοι εἶεν.





avenging those who kill tyrants, cities honour them (4.5). Finally, that Jason's relatives who succeeded him took to murdering one another might also imply that Jason's rule, if not strictly speaking a tyranny, was headed in that direction, for again Hiero says that it is characteristic of tyrants both to murder, and to be murdered by, their closest family members (3.8).<sup>29</sup> But this perhaps is not very decisive, for even Cyrus the Great's sons fought with one another for the throne after his death (*Cyr.* 8.8.2).

Xenophon, then, is very interested in the question of the relationship between Jason and tyranny, yet he comes to no hard conclusion. Therefore those who suggest that Xenophon's point in the Jason account is to warn against the dangers inherent in tyranny or point up the nemesis that extends to tyrants are probably not hitting the mark exactly.<sup>30</sup> In this regard it is enlightening to compare Jason with two similar characters in the *Hellenica*, Euphron and Mania, both of whom were associated with tyranny and were abruptly assassinated. As with Jason, Xenophon presents Euphron as preoccupied with mercenary forces: when he gained power in Sicyon he immediately deposed the commander of the mercenaries and appointed his son to the position

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<sup>29</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 120, makes too much, I think, of the difference between Jason and his successors. The "contrast" between them, he suggests, shows that in fact Jason was not a tyrant. Yet it could equally be argued that Jason had set his feet upon the path to full tyranny and his successors were the posthumous result.

<sup>30</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 110-11, calls Jason "the most cunning tyrant of all" and says that the death of Jason in Xenophon's narrative, "suggests that tyranny will inevitably invite assaults."



(7.1.45); he then gratified some of the mercenaries so as to make them personally loyal to himself, and spared no expense in hiring more; he used these mercenaries to help his allies so that they would overlook his despotism (7.1.46); when the Sicyonians together with others attacked Phlius, Euphron joined in the attack separately with his personal force of mercenaries (7.2.11);<sup>31</sup> after Euphron was forced to flee from Sicyon, he took advantage of civil strife within the city and, employing mercenaries from Athens, again gained (partial) control of the city (7.3.4). Euphron was later murdered--again like Jason--very suddenly in public, in this case in Thebes by some Sicyonians whom he had previously exiled (7.3.4). But unlike Jason, Xenophon clearly portrays Euphron as both tyrannical and thoroughly wicked. He was a habitual traitor, blithely switching allegiance from the Spartans to their enemies (7.1.44), then back again to the Spartans when that was advantageous to him--brazenly lying to them about his previous activities and motives (7.3.2)--then reverting back again to the Thebans (7.3.4). Euphron was also impious, seizing both public and sacred monies to hire mercenaries (7.1.46). When he gained control of the city the first time, he banished some as pro-Spartan and took their money, and by deceit he either killed or banished those who were originally in power with him. Xenophon

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<sup>31</sup>Xenophon emphasizes the distinction between the regular Sicyonian citizen army, which was evidently commanded by someone else, and Euphron's own mercenary force of two thousand: the Theban commander in Sicyon led out his own garrison, the Sicyonians and the Pelleneans, "and Euphron, with his own force of about two thousand mercenaries, campaigned with them" (καὶ Εὐφρόν δὲ τοὺς αὐτοῦ ἔχων μισθοφόρους περὶ δισχιλίου συνέστρατεύετο).



concludes: “The result was that he subjected everything to himself and was clearly a tyrant” (7.1.46).<sup>32</sup> The defense speech of one of Euphron’s assassins summed up what the man was truly like: impious, traitorous and tyrannical (7.3.7-8).

Higgins suggests that the parallels between Jason and Euphron indicate that just as the latter’s fate was the inevitable outworking of the evils of tyrannical quest for power, so was the former’s.<sup>33</sup> But Euphron is not the only character in the *Hellenica* who displays striking parallels to Jason. Though the connection is little observed, Mania is more like Jason than Euphron.<sup>34</sup> She had the same interest in mercenaries, but unlike Euphron, who never trained his mercenaries or used them effectively,<sup>35</sup> she observed her mercenaries carefully as they stormed the city walls, and faultlessly rewarded those whose deeds were praiseworthy, so that her mercenary force was splendidly equipped. They were also very effective, for Mania added to the cities which she had inherited from her

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<sup>32</sup>ὥστε πάντα ὑφ’ ἑαυτῷ ἐποιήσατο καὶ σαφῶς τύραννος ἦν.

<sup>33</sup>Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 109-110.

<sup>34</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 49, 166 and Krentz, *Xenophon*, *Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 163 make a passing connection between Mania and Jason as exemplary leaders, but fail to make anything significant of it. Xenophon’s presentation of Mania seems to owe much to the Herodotean Artemisia (see especially Hdt. 7.99.1-3).

<sup>35</sup>See especially 7.2.15 where the forces of Euphron were said to be just standing around watching the Phliasians set up their trophy, as though they had run up to see a spectacle. Xenophon’s language suggests how ridiculous they were: οἱ δὲ περὶ... τὸν Εὐφρόνα περιεώρων ταῦτα, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ θεῶν περιδεδραμηκότες.



husband (3.1.13). She too, like Jason, died suddenly at an assassin's hand. Moreover, her assassination was connected with her tyrannic power. "It is said that when she was now more than forty years old, because Meidias, her daughter's husband, had been stirred up by some who said it was shameful for a woman to rule while he remained a private citizen, and because she trusted Meidias and greeted him as a woman typically does her son-in-law (though she protected herself against others very carefully as is fitting in a tyranny), he came in and strangled her" (3.1.14). Yet though she is said to have exercised tyrannic power and to have died in connection with it, she was, very unlike Euphron, faultlessly virtuous. In addition to the military virtues which we have already mentioned, Xenophon shows that she won the satrapy by her generosity and humility (3.1.12). Moreover, she kept her fiefdom by blameless fidelity and great generosity to Pharnabazus, her overlord: she paid her tribute faithfully and in addition brought many gifts to Pharnabazus when she visited him; when he returned a visit she entertained him more lavishly than any of the other governors; she kept the cities which Pharnabazus gave her loyal and won over to him other cities on the coast as well and accompanied him on his military expeditions. As a result she was highly honoured by Pharnabazus and was summoned now and again as his counsellor (3.1.13).<sup>36</sup> It might be

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<sup>36</sup>See Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 29-32 for a more detailed discussion of the unalloyed virtues of Mania as presented by Xenophon. See also Cartledge, "Xenophon's Women: A Touch of the Other," 8, who writes, "Xenophon's Mania is represented wholly positively in the *Hellenica*."





argued that her one fault was inattention with respect to Meidias, her son-in-law, but this is not the implication of Xenophon's language.<sup>37</sup>

So of these three assassinated "tyrants" Jason fell midway between the other two with respect to virtue. We cannot, therefore, point to the parallels between Euphron and Jason and conclude that Jason's assassination indicates that he was somehow justly punished for his tyrannical nature or his excessive ambition and power. We might just as well conclude that the virtuous tyranny of Mania indicates that Jason was an exemplary figure. The example of Mania implies that it is possible for one to hold tyrannic power virtuously, which is precisely what Simonides advises Hiero to do in the final section of Xenophon's dialogue (*Hiero* 8.1-11.15).<sup>38</sup> It is perhaps not entirely surprising that Xenophon should consider it is possible for one to hold tyrannic power with a measure of virtue, since Herodotus (1.59.6) commended the tyrant Pisistratus for the excellence of his government and Thucydides (6.54.5) spoke well of Pisistratid intelligence and moderation. The main point of Jason's life and death, therefore, is that power and position, however held, are altogether uncertain and ephemeral. Whether one holds power

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<sup>37</sup>Xenophon writes, τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους μάλα φυλαττομένης αὐτῆς, ὥσπερ ἐν τυραννίδι προσῆκεν, ἐκείνῳ δὲ πιστευσούσης καὶ ἀσπαζομένης ὥσπερ ἂν γυνὴ γαμβρὸν ἀσπάζοιτο... The parallel structure of the two parts of this expression suggest that just as to be on guard against all others was fitting and reasonable (προσῆκεν), so it was reasonable for her to greet her son-in-law without such precaution. See Cartledge, "Xenophon's Women," 9.

<sup>38</sup>Krentz, *Xenophon Hellenika II.3.11-IV.2.8*, 164, maintains that the reference to Mania's rule as a tyranny suggests something sinister in spite of her otherwise shining virtue. But there is not the slightest hint of excess or despotism in Mania's actions; in fact Xenophon appears to place great emphasis on her submission and fidelity to her overlord Pharnabazus.



virtuously (Mania) or viciously (Euphron) or ambiguously (Jason) the end is the same: loss of life and loss of rule.

It is significant, I believe, that Jason's destruction led to political instability in Thessaly. Xenophon records this process in some detail (6.4.33-37), though the topic is wholly extraneous if the main reason Xenophon records the story of Jason is to portray him as an example of virtue or vice. After Jason's death, his brothers Polydorus and Polyphron were appointed Tagoi of Thessaly. Polyphron, however, apparently murdered his brother and made the Tageia like a tyranny (6.4.33). Polyphron revealed his tyrannical nature, according to Xenophon, by murdering virtuous Polydamas and eight other prominent Pharsalians and by exiling many Larissians (6.4.34). Polyphron ruled for only a year until Alexander, the son of Polydorus,<sup>39</sup> killed him. Alexander claimed to have killed his uncle for the sake of vengeance and in order to destroy the tyranny. His subsequent actions belied his words, however, for he was clearly worse than his predecessor: he became a harsh ruler to the Thessalians, a bitter enemy to the Thebans and Athenians, and a lawless brigand by land and sea (6.4.35). He was murdered by his wife's brothers at her insistence and according to her plan. Xenophon recounts the murder and its motives with considerable sordid detail (6.4.35-7). He concludes his account of the Thessalian succession with the comment that at the time of writing, Tisiphonus, the eldest brother, held power

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<sup>39</sup>Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century B. C.*, 128.



(6.4.37).

In this account of the Thessalian succession, Xenophon seems at pains to show that after Jason's death the situation in Thessaly degenerated progressively. There was clearly a progressive moral decline, from the self-disciplined and intelligent Jason to the tyrannical Polyphron, to the thoroughly wicked Alexander. But there was political decline as well. Jason had elevated Thessaly to a leading power in Greece with aspirations for hegemony. After Jason's demise, Xenophon's account of Thessaly is wholly taken up with the internal turmoil and self-destruction of the leading family. It ends with the leadership of Tisiphonus, who came to rule through a process set in motion by a woman, his sister, which he and his brothers in their timidity had to be coerced into completing. The overall impression of the succession account, therefore, is that with the death of Jason, Thessaly went quickly downhill as a political and military power. It appears that the determinative factor for the brief ascendancy of Thessaly was the extraordinary personal energy, intelligence and ambition of Jason.

Dillery asserts that Xenophon is not otherwise interested in Thessaly, except as the life of Jason parallels the downfall of Sparta.<sup>40</sup> But in fact Xenophon is interested in Thessaly when it impinges on the question of political leadership in Greece. At 2.3.4, Xenophon records

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<sup>40</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 171.





the activities of Lycophron, who was probably Jason's father.<sup>41</sup> Lycophron, Xenophon states, "wishing to rule all of Thessaly, defeated in battle those Thessalians who were opposed to him, both the Larissians and others, and killed many." This seemingly insignificant note, often considered a later addition to the text, is probably meant to prepare the reader for the rise of Jason, such that the Thessalian digressions of 6.1 and 6.4 are not peripheral to Xenophon's overall purpose. Jason's role in the *Hellenica* as a whole, therefore, is as an example of an individual leader whose singular abilities brought his state to the verge of hegemony in Greece, prevented only by his sudden assassination.

We can see now how Polydamas contrasts with Jason. Polydamas was faithful to his Spartan allies, while Jason betrayed the Spartans though he was their πρόξενος at Pherae; Polydamas was universally trusted, while Jason was mistrusted as a potential tyrant; Polydamas faithfully preserved the monies of his city, while Jason may have had designs on the treasury of Apollo. Moreover, Jason was a leader of surpassing power and ambition, whose sudden death ended the political stability of Thessaly and the hope of a Thessalian-led order in Greece. Polydamas, on the other hand, was not a man of great power and ambition, but of great justice and fidelity. By his justice he maintained order in the midst of the disunity and turmoil of *stasis* within his city and in his fidelity to the Spartans he displayed the sort of behaviour

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<sup>41</sup>See Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century B. C.*, 68.



which fostered stability in inter-state relations in Greece. He is important for Xenophon because he embodied the qualities which are necessary to bring order from political chaos. Polydamas is then the personal counterpart to the city of Phlius. In his digression on Phlius (7.2.1-23), Xenophon emphasizes the unity of her citizenry in maintaining the integrity of the city (7.2.5-9) and her steadfast fidelity to Sparta (7.2.2,17; 3.1). This relatively small city, moreover, maintained its good order in the shadow of the great power of Sparta, just as Polydamas' virtuous activities were overshadowed by the greatness of Jason. Xenophon's point then is that the positive political virtues so needed by Greece are perhaps more likely to be found in the minor figures than the major. Polydamas, therefore, serves as a wistful backlight to the much more outwardly prominent Jason.

The status of Phlius in the *Hellenica* deserves further consideration. Dillery asserts that both individuals and communities function in the *Hellenica* as paradigms which are "emblematic of the deep forces at work in the history of the age."<sup>42</sup> The case of Phlius seems to support this idea since this city functions as a paradigm in a way very similar to the individual Polydamas. There are a number of other communities in the *Hellenica* which also seem to function paradigmatically in tandem with individuals. The Demos of Athens during the trial of the Arginusae generals seems as fickle and as little

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<sup>42</sup>Dillery, *History of His Times*, 249-50.



concerned with justice as the demagogic Theramenes (see above, pp. 68-82). Both the collective and the individual represent the nature of a corrupt democracy. The response of the Spartan community in squelching the noble aspirations of Cinadon seem to be the reverse side of Agesilaus' promotion of such unworthies as Herippidas, Phoebidas and Sphodrias (see above pp. 219-20, 236-8, 263-9). Here both the state and the king epitomize the forces which work like a cancer to degrade Spartan society. Again Agesilaus' Ephesus exemplifies the energy, discipline and piety which Agesilaus at his best displayed and which might have brought about the Greek conquest of Persia (see above pp. 225-31). Examples could no doubt be multiplied.

### **Epaminondas**

It is widely held that Xenophon exhibits a strong anti-Theban bias in the *Hellenica* which colours his presentation of Epaminondas. By this understanding, Thebes is the object of Xenophon's ire because she destroyed the power of Sparta. Often it is simply assumed, *a priori*, that the writer's picture of Epaminondas is negative because this Theban was the main architect of the collapse of Spartan hegemony.<sup>43</sup> The basis of this assumption, however, is questionable. Xenophon does appear to treat the Thebans with contempt on occasion. He reports them taking a

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<sup>43</sup>See Underhill, *Commentary on Xenophon's Hellenica*, xxviii; G. L. Cawkwell, "Epaminondas and Thebes," 66 (1972): 254-78, especially 256-7; John Buckler, *The Theban Hegemony, 371-362 BC* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), 264-8; Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 138.



bribe from the Great King (3.5.1), highlights their extreme volatility at the battle of Haliartus (3.5.21-22), and their cowardice at the battle of Nemea (4.2.18); referring to their prowess during the invasion of the Peloponnese in 362, he sarcastically calls them fire-breathers (7.5.12). Yet Xenophon was very free in his criticism of other states as well; we would hardly call his treatment of the trial of the Arginusae generals (1.7.1-35) complimentary to the Athenians, or his account of the seizure of the Cadmea (5.2.25-36) flattering to the Spartans. Moreover, Xenophon had much to say that was positive toward the Thebans.<sup>44</sup> When the Corinthians, in effect rebuking the Thebans, refused to equate peace with alliance, the Thebans admired their noble sentiments (7.4.10). Xenophon also states that in their joy at Leuctra the Thebans were becoming well-trained soldiers (6.5.23). Again, if Xenophon is in fact strongly anti-Theban, one would expect him to portray Lycomedes, the main instigator of the Arcadian rebellion against Thebes (7.1.23-24, 39-40) in a positive light; instead, Xenophon perceived in his death the clear hand of heaven (7.4.3).<sup>45</sup> We should not, therefore, allow the doubtful

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<sup>44</sup>Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, 204-10, calls into question Xenophon's anti-Thebanism (followed by Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 119), but fails to cite specific instances in the *Hellenica*.

<sup>45</sup>Buckler, *Theban Hegemony*, 267, points to Xenophon's treatment of Lycomedes as an indication of his anti-Thebanism since Xenophon focusses on his anti-Theban activities to the exclusion of his other exploits. Buckler, however, fails to take into account Xenophon's description of Lycomedes' death and the strongly implied disapproval contained therein. Lycomedes was a negative character to Xenophon because he typified the political leaders of his day who fostered a sense of self-importance in their own states to the detriment of a peaceful settlement in Greece (7.1.27).





assumption of Xenophon's anti-Thebanism to prejudice our evaluation of Epaminondas in the *Hellenica*.

Epaminondas enters Xenophon's narrative for the first time just after the initial appearance of his great Theban contemporary Pelopidas. The portrayal of Pelopidas parallels in one important way that of Epaminondas. At 7.1.33, Xenophon says that the Thebans thought that they might gain some advantage if they appealed to the Persian king, "since they were continually wanting to gain the leadership of Greece." Then follows the account of Pelopidas' and the other Greek envoys' attempt to win Artaxerxes over to the way of thinking that would be most beneficial to the city of each. Xenophon reports that Pelopidas had a clear advantage over the other Greek envoys because of the traditionally pro-Persian stance of the Thebans. Pelopidas used his advantageous position skilfully, reminding the king of the Theban support for Xerxes at Plataea, that the Thebans had never made war on the king, and that Sparta was now hostile to them because they had refused to join Agesilaus in his attack on Asia and had not allowed him to sacrifice at Aulis (7.1.34). The Theban military successes at Leuctra and in the Peloponnese also contributed greatly to Pelopidas' reputation with the king, Xenophon tells us. So great, it appears, was Pelopidas' stature before Artaxerxes that one of the Athenian envoys, Timagoras, won second place in the esteem of the king simply for supporting the statements of Pelopidas (7.1.35). The support of Timagoras also points out that Pelopidas was held in high esteem not only by the Persian king



but also by the Greeks, and more so because Timagoras was an envoy of the enemy of Thebes and Pelopidas. In the end Pelopidas' ascendancy was so complete that the king asked him what he wanted to be written in the decree (7.1.36). Pelopidas asked for those things which would give the Thebans control of affairs in Greece: Sparta should relinquish control of Messene and Athens should draw up her ships. The king adopted these suggestions unaltered.

It is often thought that this portrayal of Pelopidas is a negative one, either because it highlighted Theban greed and ambition,<sup>46</sup> because it was based on the odious actions of Thebes at Plataea<sup>47</sup> or because the treaty ultimately came to nothing.<sup>48</sup> But much could be said against this view.<sup>49</sup> There is little doubt that the medizing aspects of Pelopidas' appeal--especially the reference to Plataea--would have been seen in a negative light by many of Xenophon's readers. But Greek attitudes toward Persia were somewhat ambivalent during the classical period<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Cawkwell, "Epaminondas and Thebes," 256.

<sup>47</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 154.

<sup>48</sup>Buckler, *Theban Hegemony*, 267.

<sup>49</sup>G. S. Shrimpton, "The Theban Supremacy in Fourth-Century Literature," *Phoenix* 25 (1971): 310-18, assumes, without elaborating, that Pelopidas is "lauded...for his diplomatic successes in the court of the Great King in 368/367" by Xenophon (p. 312).

<sup>50</sup>See Margaret C. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century B. C.: a Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).



and Xenophon himself often takes a benign attitude to things Persian.<sup>51</sup> That Pelopidas was involved in an appeal to the Great King carries little negative baggage in itself since this was a common Greek practice at the time; the Thebans in fact were able to use the presence at the Persian court of the Spartan Euthycles to justify the embassy of Pelopidas (7.1.33). Neither does Xenophon's description of the Theban embassy suggest a negative appraisal: the reference to Theban victories against Sparta shows that Pelopidas' position before Artaxerxes was established by more than simple medizing. Pelopidas' use of Thebes' past support for the Persians may represent nothing more than his prudent exploitation of whatever propaganda lay to hand.<sup>52</sup>

Xenophon makes it clear, however, that this great diplomatic victory of Pelopidas was ultimately fruitless. The Thebans were not even able to get their own allies to swear to the deal, much less the Spartans and the Athenians (7.1.38-40). Yet the impression one receives from Xenophon's narrative is that this was not the fault of Pelopidas but rather of the fractiousness of the Theban allies. At 7.1.32, Xenophon states that up to this point the Thebans and all those who had

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<sup>51</sup>Xenophon is positive toward Persians such as Cyrus the Younger in the *Anabasis* and Pharnabazus in the *Hellenica*; in the *Cyropaedia* he chooses a Persian, rather than a Greek, as the "historical" figure most worthy of emulation. In the *Oeconomicus* (3.5), Socrates commends the Persian king as a positive example to Critobulus: "Let us not be ashamed to imitate the Persian king." See also Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*.

<sup>52</sup> "He could argue that his state had, alone among the Greeks, fought on the Persian side at Plataea--a dubious point, perhaps, from the patriotic viewpoint, but diplomatically useful." Hamilton, *Failure of Spartan Hegemony*, 237.





withdrawn from the Spartan alliance had worked and fought unitedly under the leadership of the Thebans. But then Lycomedes the Mantinean gained prominence among the Arcadians by appealing to their national pride. He suggested that the Arcadians were superior to the other Greeks and should therefore be ashamed to follow the lead of others, whether that of Thebes or Sparta (7.1.23-24). Though Lycomedes' words had the effect of "puffing up" his fellow-countrymen,<sup>53</sup> the Arcadians did have substantive reasons as well to be proud of themselves (7.1.25). Arcadian pride provoked Theban envy and the hostility of Elis towards Arcadia (7.1.26). Xenophon sums up the prevailing attitude: "Thus each of the allies thought very highly of themselves" (7.1.27). Xenophon further underlines this inter-alliance strife by reporting that when the Spartans handed the Arcadians a stunning defeat, the Thebans and the Eleans were almost as happy about it as the Spartans were (7.1.32). Xenophon's account of the Theban attempt to get their allies to swear to the truce again highlights the testy attitude of not just the Arcadians but of all the allies toward Thebes (7.1.39-40). Tuplin asserts that Xenophon here presents Pelopidas at the conference in Persia as "selling his soul by laying claim to Persian gratitude for Theban support of Xerxes--and getting absolutely nothing in return."<sup>54</sup> This, however,

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<sup>53</sup>With his use of the word ἀναφυσάω Xenophon shows that he did not think much of Lycomedes' actions here.

<sup>54</sup>Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 154.



misses the mark, for it fails to take into account the contrast between the extraordinary success of Pelopidas in Persia and his absolute failure in Greece due to the intractability of the Greeks. This then is the context of Pelopidas' failure: it was not due to his own lack of effort, but to the divisive spirit which prevailed among the Greeks, particularly among the allies of Thebes. This too was the reason that Thebes was not able to gain hegemony in Greece at this time, for Xenophon ends his treatment of Pelopidas with the following summary: "And, on the one hand, this attempt at leadership by Pelopidas and the Thebans thus fell apart."

But the Theban attempt at primacy did not end there. Immediately after this summary of Pelopidas' failure, Xenophon mentions Epaminondas for the first time in the *Hellenica*. Xenophon's wording here links Epaminondas in a significant way with Pelopidas: "But on the other hand, Epaminondas in turn, wishing to win over the Achaeans in order that the Arcadians and the other allies might pay closer heed to the Thebans, realized that it was necessary to take the field against Achaea" (7.1.41).<sup>55</sup> The structure of this sentence with the initial αὐθις ("in turn") and the δὲ corresponding to the μὲν of the preceding statement about Pelopidas, implies that Epaminondas was trying as well to bring about the hegemony of Thebes, not now by diplomatic, but rather by

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<sup>55</sup>The whole passage, including the final reference to Pelopidas, is καὶ αὕτη μὲν ἡ Πελοπίδου καὶ τῶν Θηβαίων τῆς ἀρχῆς περιβολὴ οὕτω διελύθη. Αὐθις δ' Ἐπαμεινώνδας, βουλευθεὶς τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς προσαγαγέσθαι, ὅπως μᾶλλον σφίσι καὶ οἱ Ἀρκάδες καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι σύμμαχοι προσέχοιεν τὸν νοῦν, ἔγνω ἐκστρατευτέον εἶναι ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀχαιάν.



military, means. In the Achaean expedition which follows, Epaminondas was highly successful and proved himself a very prudent commander. The aristocrats, who were in power in Achaea at this time, appealed to Epaminondas, and he exercised his authority such that the nobles were not exiled and the constitution remained unchanged. He simply took pledges from the Achaeans on the basis that they would be allies and would follow wherever the Thebans should lead (7.1.42). He went home, therefore, with his purpose fully and peaceably achieved.<sup>56</sup> Upon his arrival home, however, the Arcadians and “the members of the opposing party” (probably the Achaean democrats)<sup>57</sup> condemned Epaminondas’ Achaean settlement on the grounds that he had set things up in a way favourable to the Lacedaemonians. The Thebans therefore decided to send harmosts to each of the Achaean cities. These harmosts, together with the democrats in Achaea, expelled the aristocrats and set up democracies. The result was disastrous for the Theban cause, for the numerous aristocrats expelled from the Achaean cities joined forces quickly and conquered their cities one by one. From then on they abandoned their former neutrality and became enthusiastic supporters of

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<sup>56</sup>Xenophon’s portrayal of Epaminondas here would seem to belie Westlake’s opinion, (“Individuals in Xenophon, *Hellenica*,” 259) that “Xenophon nowhere credits [Epaminondas] with any qualities other than those of a military leader. He fails to appreciate, or refuses to appreciate, that Epaminondas was also a statesman with enlightened views.”

<sup>57</sup>Most commentators believe that the reference is most likely to the Achaean democrats. See Underhill, *Xenophon: Hellenica*, 282; *CAH*, vol. 6, 197-8; and the translation of Rex Warner, *A History of My Times*, 368. Tuplin, *Failings of Empire*, 154, assumes that it refers to Thebans opposed to Epaminondas. Xenophon does not make it clear who exactly he has in mind.



Sparta (7.1.43). So again with Epaminondas, as with Pelopidas, a signal political victory achieved by a Theban leader was undermined by the divisiveness of the Greeks, now not that between members of an alliance but among partisans within a single state.

Xenophon clearly thinks well of Epaminondas' actions here. He established a neutral state as a firm and powerful ally of Thebes in a very orderly manner involving no violence or constitutional disruption in Achaea. Evidence for this is found not only in Xenophon's description of the effectiveness and benignity of Epaminondas' deeds, but also in the contrast he draws between Epaminondas and the odious Euphron by juxtaposing these two political leaders. Immediately after the account of these doings in Achaea, Xenophon begins the story of Euphron whose first political action was, significantly, to overthrow his city's constitution though "up to this point in Sicyon the constitution was established according to the traditional laws" (7.1.44). The impression we get, therefore, is that Epaminondas had the qualities necessary to bring about hegemony for his state and order in Greece. Yet he seems to have been thwarted by forces beyond his control, particularly the disunity and turmoil which were endemic to Greece. And Pelopidas had had a remarkably similar experience. It is extraordinary that Xenophon chooses to mention both of the outstanding Theban leaders of this period for the first time in the *Hellenica* in the same section of the work, one right on the heels of the other, and that he presents them in such a similar way. It will not do to simply dismiss the late appearance of these





two as anti-Theban prejudice,<sup>58</sup> for he present both characters very favourably. He seems rather to have saved them until now to make the same political point with each: disunity and political fragmentation had progressed to such a degree in Greece that even the efforts of these outstanding leaders could not bring order. But again it is important to note that Xenophon does not bring them into his record primarily to highlight their virtues but rather to show their ultimate failure in spite of their fine efforts.

In his next appearance in the *Hellenica*, Epaminondas was forced to respond to ongoing turmoil in Arcadia. The leaders of Arcadia had been using the sacred monies to maintain the army until the Mantineans declared that the monies should not be so used. The Arcadian League in response condemned the Mantineans and sent the army against them (7.4.33). While the Mantineans held out, the rest of the Arcadians thought better of their actions with respect to the sacred treasure and passed a resolution similar to that of the Mantineans. In fear, the Arcadian leaders who had misused the money, sent to Thebes for help on the pretext that Arcadia looked like it would go over to the Spartan side (7.4.34). But while the Thebans prepared for war, another faction convinced the Arcadian assembly to send a request that the Thebans not dispatch an army. The peace then established was soon shattered by more factional intrigue, however, for the Boeotian

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<sup>58</sup>Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 35-6; Buckler, *Theban Hegemony*, 266-7.



commander and the Arcadian leaders who feared an audit with their supporters shut the gates of Tegea where everyone was celebrating the peace, and imprisoned all the nobles (7.4.36). When this plot looked like it would fail through widespread opposition, the Boeotian commander, released all those arrested and claimed he had been deceived into acting as he did (7.4.37-38). The Arcadians knew that he was lying, yet acquitted him. At the same time they sent an accusation to Thebes saying he should be put to death (7.4.39). Epaminondas, who happened to be general at this time, supported the Boeotian commander and declared that the Thebans would indeed be marching into Arcadia to carry on the war together with those who agree with them (7.4.40).

Epaminondas appears to be taking the wrong side in this affair. First, he defended the Theban commander, who was clearly a vacillating fool. Second, he seems to be a war-monger, for in spite of the Arcadian assembly's appeal for the Thebans not to march out (7.4.35), Epaminondas determined that they would. Yet Epaminondas may have made the most reasonable decision possible under the circumstances, for the Peloponnese was in a state of extreme political turmoil. Epaminondas, in stark contrast to the Boeotian commander and to the conflicted leadership of the Arcadians, was decisive and resolute. He would not allow the situation to remain uncertain but would do what he could to establish order where none existed.

In his account of Epaminondas' campaign in the Peloponnese in the year 362 (7.5.1-25), Xenophon provides an evaluation in his own



voice. “On the one hand I, at any rate, would say that this campaign of his was not lucky (οὐκ εὐτυχῆ). Nevertheless, with respect to deeds of foresight and daring, it seems to me that the man was not at all negligent” (7.5.8). These two sentences embody the essence of Xenophon’s portrayal of Epaminondas: he consistently displayed intelligence, energy and vigour in his endeavours, yet remained unsuccessful.

Xenophon seems at pains to present Epaminondas as a blameless commander in this campaign.<sup>59</sup> Epaminondas marched out quickly against the Peloponnese, showing energy and resolve. Yet when he realized that it would be advantageous to intercept the Athenians as they marched by to join the anti-Theban coalition of the Peloponnese, he had the discipline to wait at Nemea. He showed, then, an admirable combination of daring and disciplined patience. Noteworthy too is Epaminondas’ intelligence: he showed a keen awareness of the importance of encouragement for his own troops and of discouragement of the opposing forces (7.5.6). It is true that Epaminondas’ efforts at Nemea were for naught because the Athenians decided to go by sea instead of by land, but this was no fault of Epaminondas, since the Athenians “changed their minds” about going by land (7.5.7). Epaminondas, in other words, had good information and acted astutely according to this information; it was only because the Athenians

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<sup>59</sup>See Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, 200-204.





happened to change their plans that Epaminondas' designs were fruitless.

Xenophon then extols the decision of Epaminondas to encamp within the walls of Tegea. Here he had protection from enemy attack, secrecy to conceal his activities from the enemy, easy access to supplies and a vantage point from which he could determine whether the dispositions of the enemy afforded a good opportunity for a foray or not (7.5.8). Unfortunately, however, no city was coming over to him and time was getting on. Seeing this, he realized that he had to act. He received information that Agesilaus had marched out from Sparta to join the allies at Mantinea. Attempting to take advantage of the undefended status of the city, Epaminondas showed good resolve and daring in marching straight to Sparta. He would indeed have caught the city like a nest with no defender, if a Cretan "by some divine fate" (θεῖα τιμὴ μοῖρα) had not come upon the Theban expedition and announced its intentions to Agesilaus (7.5.9-10).

When Epaminondas reached Sparta, now guarded--though quite inadequately--by the forces of Agesilaus, he again used great intelligence in evaluating his situation and reacting to it. He decided against an attack on level ground where his troops would be exposed to bombardment from the rooftops and would lose the advantage of their greater numbers. Rather he positioned himself where he would have the advantage and would be able to descend rather than ascend against the city (7.5.11). Yet he was unsuccessful. To explain this setback



Xenophon again introduces the divine: “It is possible to attribute what happened next to the divine (τὸ θεῖον), and it is also possible to say that no one can stand up to those who are desperate” (7.5.12) The writer does offer a natural explanation (desperation) along with the supernatural, but the ongoing narrative suggests that the latter explanation is foremost in the writer’s mind, for when the battle was stalemated he notes that it seemed as if the divine (τὸ θεῖον) had circumscribed the limits of the victory of Archidamos and his few soldiers (7.5.13). This last reference to the divine is very significant in that it strongly suggests that Xenophon does not understand the divine thwarting of Epaminondas as nemesis, since the limit upheld by the divine was to the favour of the Thebans now.<sup>60</sup> The divine serves to keep either side from winning a decisive victory. So again, though Xenophon might have come up with some reason to blame Epaminondas for the Theban defeat by so few opponents, he rather underlines both Epaminondas’ astute dispositions and the activity of the divine which thwarted his efforts.

Epaminondas now sized up his situation and decided that a return to Tegea was in order, which he executed with great speed. The most important part of his calculation, significantly, was that the enemy had been fortunate while his own troops had been unfortunate.<sup>61</sup> He then

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<sup>60</sup>Pace Pownall, “Condemnation of the Impious,” 268-9.

<sup>61</sup>Epaminondas described the enemy troops as ἡντυχηκότες and his own as ἀποτετυχηκότες. Warner’s translation of this, which simply speaks of the enemy having done well and his own troops badly, does not at all capture the emphasis on τύχη which is present.



prevailed upon the cavalry to go to Mantinea since it was likely that the herds and people of Mantinea were outside of the city at this time (7.5.14). His prognostications were manifestly true, for when the Mantineans spotted the Theban cavalry, they begged the Athenian cavalry, which had just arrived, to help them; they said that all their cattle and the labourers and many children and older citizens were outside the walls. Xenophon emphasizes the virtue of the Athenians in saving the cattle and people of Mantinea,<sup>62</sup> but at the same time states that the Athenians had just now “happened” (ἐτύγχανον) to arrive at Mantinea (7.5.15-17). Again fortune had deprived Epaminondas of the achievements that might have been expected from his prudent calculations.

Xenophon’s admiration for Epaminondas becomes even more prominent in the account of his last days. Faced with an imminent withdrawal from the Peloponnese, Epaminondas thought deeply on his situation: he considered the fate of his allies and of himself if he should withdraw at this point. He finally decided that he could not leave without forcing a battle. He reckoned that if he was victorious he would set at naught all his misfortunes, but if he should die in the attempt it would be a glorious end, since he would then die in the attempt to win hegemony over the Peloponnese for his homeland (7.5.18). It is simply

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<sup>62</sup>Part of the admirable valour of the Athenians was that they were eager to attack the Thebans though they were outnumbered and had suffered misfortune (δυστύχημα) in Corinth. Thus they were admirable for the same reason as Epaminondas, who continued to fight boldly though unlucky.



not true that in putting these motives in Epaminondas' mind, Xenophon exhibits a "hostile attitude" toward him and that he "makes Epaminondas bring on the battle as a desperate last throw."<sup>63</sup> In fact, Xenophon expresses admiration for Epaminondas' attitude. He writes, "That he thought such things does not seem to me to be an altogether amazing thing (θαυμαστόν), for such are the thoughts of emulous men (φιλότιμοι ἄνδρες)." Dover states that the word φιλότιμος often carries the idea of selfless patriotism, and uses Xenophon's description of Epaminondas here as an example.<sup>64</sup> Xenophon then enumerates the different ways in which Epaminondas trained his army to be disciplined, enduring, courageous and enthusiastic (7.5.19-20) and says "truly... these things are more marvellous" (θαυμαστότερα); that is, even more marvellous than Epaminondas' patriotic attitude to which he just previously referred. This understanding of Xenophon's attitude here accords well with ideas he expresses elsewhere in his writings: ambition (φιλοτιμία) is commendable so long as it is not self-centred, but concerned with the greater good and glory of one's own state (See *Mem.* 2.6.20-27). According to the *Hellenica*, Epaminondas sought to win hegemony not for himself but for his homeland (τῇ πατρίδι) and had in fact caused his homeland to be held in such high regard that the

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<sup>63</sup>Cawkwell, *Xenophon. History of My Times*, 401, note.

<sup>64</sup>Dover, *Greek Morality*, 230-1.





Arcadians were painting Theban devices on their own shields (7.5.18).

Furthermore, Xenophon commends not just Epaminondas' attitude and the training of his troops, but also his subsequent actions. He says "It is well worth considering in turn what he did when he led out these troops who were so well prepared." Xenophon then reports how Epaminondas cleverly tricked the enemy into thinking the Thebans were not preparing to attack. He especially highlights the psychological effect that the Theban's actions produced in the enemy, lulling them into a destructive complacency (7.5.21-2), and then showing great skill in manoeuvring his troops into position to attack (7.5.22). When the attack came, we notice how intelligent and skilful Epaminondas' preparations had been, for as he advanced the enemy were scrambling around to put on their equipment and arrange themselves in order. "They seemed like those who were expecting to suffer rather than those expecting to inflict suffering." Xenophon describes the battle with significant strategic detail from the perspective of the Thebans, more specifically, in terms of the planning of Epaminondas.<sup>65</sup> Everything the Theban army did was according to the careful designs of its general, and in the end "all his anticipations were fulfilled"<sup>66</sup> and the entire enemy force was routed (7.5.24). Epaminondas, however, died, and his army

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<sup>65</sup>Note that he constantly resorts to the thinking of Epaminondas in the battle account: νομίζων, εἰδώς (7.5.23); νομίζων, βουλόμενος (7.5.25).

<sup>66</sup>Warner's translation of καὶ οὐκ ἐψεύσθη τῆς ἐλπίδος.



was hopelessly incapable of following up on the devastating victory of their late commander. The Theban victory, therefore, was entirely dependent on him personally; yet just when his brilliant efforts looked like they had finally achieved the positive results they deserved, fortune again turned against him, he was killed and his efforts came to nothing. In the end the battle was a stalemate and, contrary to expectation, neither side attained clear hegemony; Greece remained in a state of great indecision and turmoil, which seemed ordained by the god (7.5.26-27). Thus ends the *Hellenica*.

It is intriguing that the last great leader that Xenophon portrays in his *Hellenica* should be presented as personally faultless yet militarily and politically ineffectual. I agree in general with Gray's positive evaluation of Epaminondas in *Hell.* 7.5.1-27, but I disagree with the conclusion she draws from it. She believes that the main point of the Mantinea account is to celebrate the virtues of everyone involved (including Epaminondas) and especially "the power of the gods to make what they will of human affairs," but leaves completely out of her reckoning the political implications that Xenophon clearly draws from this episode.<sup>67</sup> Xenophon's main concern is the political disorder of Greece, and he uses the divine as one element (arguably the most important element) of his explanation as to why this disorder was so intractable.

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<sup>67</sup>Gray, *Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, 170-5.



Epaminondas is a quintessentially ironic figure. He was in every way the ideal Greek commander, who displayed profound intelligence and keen foresight, as well as a propensity for quick and effective action.<sup>68</sup> He also displayed political savvy, particularly in his winning of Achaia over to the Theban alliance with no bloodshed. He had the abilities and the desire to bring a stable political settlement to Greece, but in the end his efforts and abilities accomplished nothing. His political efforts were undermined by the endemic fractiousness of the Greeks; his military ambitions were thwarted by fortune itself. His life and experience points up the curse of the Greeks: they were tremendously blessed with leaders of great ability, but could not find a solution to the political disintegration that seemed to be their divinely ordained lot.

### Summary

Nearly everything about Jason and Epaminondas suggests that they will prevail in their ambition to bring their own states into dominance in Greece, but in the end neither does. They join the company of Greek leaders, including Callicratidas, Lysander and Thrasybulus, who exhibit great potential to lead their states to pre-eminence, but die suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly, leaving the political situation in Greece in confusion. Jason and Epaminondas

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<sup>68</sup>Westlake, "Individuals," 259, recognizes the distinctive nature within the *Hellenica* of Xenophon's portrayal of Epaminondas at 7.5.1-25. He writes, "In no other passage of the *Hellenica* is so much insight shown into the essence of military leadership at the highest level."





differ from these others, however, in that Xenophon clearly attributes their demise to the divine. Jason's own words prophesy his end: "The god often rejoices to make the small great and the great small" (6.4.23). In the case of Epaminondas, his death was a big part of what "the god did" (7.5.26) such that no state in Greece was able to gain hegemony and bring a stable political order to Greece. The impression we are left with is that it is an interesting and informative exercise to analyse the thoughts and actions of military and political leaders to learn what makes them successful or not, but in the end, life and politics are in the hands of the gods and are very uncertain. The best endeavours of men, therefore, will usually go astray.



## CONCLUSIONS

### **Xenophon as a Writer**

In order to understand Xenophon's portrayal of individuals in the *Hellenica* one has to come to grips with the complexity and subtlety of Xenophon's narrative. The importance to Xenophon of the juxtapositions of individuals to bring out the nature of each can hardly be exaggerated. These juxtapositions often involve contrasts. Xenophon stresses the imperiousness and lawlessness of Alcibiades through the exemplary conduct of Hermocrates (above, pp. 43-5). He points up Jason's enormous ambition and his ultimately disruptive influence on Thessaly and Greece by the fidelity, honesty and stability of Polydamas (pp. 306-7) and Epaminondas' wisdom and political moderation by the rashness of Euphron (p. 316). A number of Xenophon's contrasts are quite complex. He meaningfully links Thrasybulus' name with Theramenes' when the former plays no part in the action in order to raise the question as to the relationship between the two, and then resorts to anachrony to bring them into juxtaposition in the narrative (pp. 117-9).<sup>1</sup> By this Xenophon indicates that the political salvation of Athens will be accomplished by the pious, selfless, straightforward, militarily astute Thrasybulus where the unrighteous, self-serving, scheming politician Theramenes showed himself incapable and unqualified to do so. The contrasts between Lysander and Callicratidas and between Theramenes

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<sup>1</sup>See also his use of anachrony in the case of the death of Pausanias to bring the implications of his death together with those of the death of Lysander (above, pp. 212-4).



and Critias are especially interesting, for they closely parallel each other. Lysander is the clever, subtle navarch who contrasts with the blunt, straightforward Callicratidas in a military context; Theramenes is the clever, subtle politician who contrasts with the blunt straightforward Critias in a political context. Moreover, in both contrasts, each member is unlike and yet like the other, for each is striving somewhat foolishly for the same honour as his opposite: Lysander and Callicratidas for victory over the Athenians and the esteem of being “master of the sea”, Theramenes and Critias for pre-eminence in the oligarchy (pp. 109-10). Sometimes Xenophon draws out the similarities of characters by giving them parallel presentations. For example, Lysander arrives on the scene just as Alcibiades is fading from view, and the Spartan is presented in much the same way as the Athenian: he appears when the fortunes of his city are at a low ebb and by his singular abilities turns the situation around. Furthermore, he is given an extraordinary command and is shown to be decidedly unconcerned to adhere to the accepted norms and laws of his state (pp. 158-9). By making Lysander the Spartan Alcibiades (and Alcibiades the Athenian Lysander) Xenophon seems to be making the observation that the shortcomings of the Athenian hegemony are the same as those of the Spartan.

Xenophon also places certain events, stories and references strategically to bring out the character of an individual. This is especially evident in the career of Agesilaus. Xenophon takes careful and detailed note--with the use of ring composition--of Agesilaus'



simultaneous overconcern for personal relationships and lack of concern for the discipline of his army during the latter stage of his Asian campaign (pp. 241-2). He also sums up the personal and military shortcomings of Agesilaus in his Asian campaign by use of a dialogue between the Spartan king and Pharnabazus which is placed immediately before Agesilaus' recall to Greece. The dialogue itself is a clever piece of writing, which turns on its head the expectation and initial appearance that Agesilaus was the noble one and Pharnabazus the degenerate (pp. 237-41). Significant too are the brief allusions to Agamemnon and Xerxes which suggest the shift in the character of Agesilaus (and Sparta) from a noble king bent on conquering the barbarian to something closer to a despotic monarch marching to conquer the Greeks (pp. 245-7).

Another subtlety of Xenophon is his penchant for letting his narrative speak rather than resorting to his own voice. We note this characteristic right at the very beginning of the *Hellenica*, for, though it seems to have been a standard feature of historiography by his time to provide an introductory statement of purpose,<sup>2</sup> he provides none. By so doing he appears to imply that his work is simply a continuation of Thucydides' (see above, pp. 14-5), yet he might just as easily have indicated this with an explicit statement. His omission, then, is an indication of his hesitance to make programmatic statements in his own voice. It is true that Xenophon occasionally does make evaluations of

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<sup>2</sup>See Hecataeus (FgrHist 1 F 1), Herodotus (1.1) and Thucydides (1.22).





characters or their actions in his own voice, but these are relatively few and far between and seem to have no broad or programmatic importance.<sup>3</sup> In two of them (2.3.56 and 5.1.4) Xenophon defends his practice of relating incidents which would not normally be considered “worthy of report” (ἀξιόλογα). At 4.8.31, he provides Thrasybulus with a positive post-mortem assessment of his character and at 6.3.3 gives Callias a less-than-flattering character evaluation in his own voice. At 6.5.51-52 he censures Iphicrates’ campaign in Corinthia and at 7.5.8 he absolves Epaminondas of blame for the setbacks of his Peloponnesian campaign. At 3.4.29, 5.2.28 and 6.1.2, he makes assessments of the minor characters Peisander, Phoebidas, and Polydamas. At 6.4.28 he comments on the greatness of Jason. Yet there is no first-person evaluation for such major characters as Alcibiades, Lysander, Critias, Callicratidas or Agesilaus. Xenophon leaves us with only the facts of his narrative to weigh up these prominent leaders. Furthermore, the first-person evaluations of more important characters are not usually focussed on the main issues of the portrayal of an individual, leaving most of the questions about the person unanswered in explicit terms. So the direct comments on Theramenes (2.3.56), Teleutias (5.1.4) and Iphicrates (6.5.51-52) actually refer to characteristics which were not

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<sup>3</sup>Compare the programmatically significant statements of Thucydides about Pericles (2.65), Cleon (3.36), Alcibiades (6.15) and Nicias (7.86).



wholly consistent with the rest of the actions of these men.<sup>4</sup> From his epitaph of Thrasybulus we might get the impression that Xenophon fully approved of this Athenian's Aegean campaign, which is not likely the case (see above, pp. 149-54). Again, he leaves it to the reader's discernment to judge if Jason in his greatness was a tyrant or had impious designs on the treasures at Delphi, which questions he explicitly raises but does not explicitly answer (pp. 296-303). A comparison of the *Hellenica* with Xenophon's *Agesilaus* is enlightening in this regard. In the latter, the author regularly evaluates in his own voice the actions of this Spartan king; in the *Hellenica* he makes not a single comment, suggesting that he believes that in the genre of history, as opposed to that of encomium, one should let the deeds speak for themselves.<sup>5</sup> In looking at this characteristic of the *Hellenica* overall, it is hard to know whether Xenophon wants the reader to come to specific conclusions about a character or an event, but to do so by his or her own deduction, or whether he simply wants the reader to ponder the issues involved and come to his or her own conclusions (whatever they may be) based on the

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<sup>4</sup>For Theramenes see above, pp. 112-4; for Teleutias compare *Hell.* 5.3.3-6; for Iphicrates compare *Hell.* 6.2.27-30.

<sup>5</sup>It is not true that Xenophon remains strictly implicit in his treatment of Agesilaus because he is raising negative points about him and therefore felt obliged not to be explicit for friendship's sake. We have already noted that most of the major (and minor) characters in the *Hellenica* are treated in the same way.

Another helpful comparison is with Plutarch. In his *Lives* of the characters that Xenophon treats, Plutarch usually has the same opinion of the individuals as Xenophon, yet often makes his assessments explicit where Xenophon leaves them implicit (see above, pp. 184, 204, 220).



raw material that he provides. I suspect from the nature of the *Hellenica* that in most cases it is the former case that applies, but I do not doubt that often it is the latter.<sup>6</sup>

### **Characterization in the *Hellenica***

There is a pervasive tendency among commentators on the *Hellenica* to categorize Xenophon's characters as either good or bad, based on whether Xenophon approves of them or not. Approval is usually determined by how closely a character conforms to Xenophon's political, moral or military standards. Xenophon, therefore, is thought to disapprove of Epaminondas and Pelopidas because they were instrumental in the decline of his beloved Sparta. Theramenes as a member of the Thirty is good in Xenophon's eyes because he was a moderate oligarch, and Callicratidas is the same because of his panhellenic views. At the same time Xenophon, it is thought, cannot possibly give Thrasybulus unstinting praise in his restoration of the democracy, because Xenophon is anti-democratic. Alcibiades, Lysander and Jason are good because of their military discipline and prowess, or they are bad because of their impiety and despotism. Agesilaus is good because he is pious and militarily astute--and besides, he is Xenophon's friend. But this approach falters for a number of reasons. First, some of the generally accepted views about Xenophon's attitudes and opinions

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<sup>6</sup>See, for example, the question of Jason's tyranny, pp. 296-303, above.





are simply false. There is little evidence, for example, that Xenophon is an anti-democratic, moderate oligarch (pp. 129-30) and it is questionable that Xenophon sees expressions of panhellenism as positive (p. 172). Furthermore, Agesilaus is clearly not portrayed in a generally positive way in the *Hellenica*, friend though he was to Xenophon.

To understand Xenophon's characterizations we must understand the overall purpose of the *Hellenica*, which is to explore the question of Greek political instability. The diversity of scholarly opinion about Xenophon's portrayal of Alcibiades, Lysander, Jason and others springs largely from the failure to understand that Xenophon's underlying focus is on the political chaos that prevailed in Greece in spite of the great resources of leadership she nurtured. Some point to passages like 5.3.7, where Xenophon expatiates in his own voice on the perils of anger, to prove that Xenophon's main concern in the *Hellenica* is to moralize.<sup>7</sup> But just as Xenophon's first-person evaluations of individuals do not point to the main focus of his characterizations (see above, pp. 330-2), neither does *Hell.* 5.3.7 capture the spirit of the work as a whole. According to his overall purpose, therefore, Xenophon portrays both the strengths of individuals--particularly those which showed their potential to bring stability to their own cities or to Greece as a whole--and their weaknesses--especially the personal irregularities which led to military and political disorder. His typical approach to the characterization is to

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<sup>7</sup>Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 273, note, points to this passage as "a good instance of Xenophon's moralizing method."



begin by showing the assets and potentials of an individual tempered gradually by his shortcomings, which issue in his downfall, which is detrimental to the strength or stability of the individual's state and of Greece as a whole. Alcibiades, Lysander, Callicratidas, Agesilaus and Jason are examples of this pattern. Xenophon's portrayals of Thrasybulus and Theramenes do not follow quite the same configuration. With these two Xenophon is mainly concerned with the stability of the Athenian state. Theramenes was a thorough scoundrel who used his extraordinary political skills selfishly and deceptively such that he was largely responsible for the political turmoil of Athens which led up to the defeat of Athens at Aegospotami and that which followed the end of the war in the rule of the Thirty. Thrasybulus in contrast used his considerable political and military abilities piously, wisely and conservatively to bring about a stability which lasted down to the time of the writing of the *Hellenica* in the 350s (2.4.43). He was indeed a model which could be followed by all leaders, though his later imperialistic endeavours were somewhat foolishly undertaken. It seems to me that minor characters in the *Hellenica* point up a persistent preoccupation of the work. Some figures, for example Iphicrates and Teleutias, show themselves quite virtuous at first but then a flaw appears which results in the undoing of themselves and in a detriment to their state. These simply follow the most common pattern of the major characters as I have just delineated, and their portrayal is to be explained in the same way. But minor characters like Hermocrates (above, pp. 43-5), Polydamas



(283-5) and Mania (pp. 301-2) stand out as exemplary in every particular. I believe that to Xenophon the fidelity, honesty, and submission to the established νόμοι of these characters somehow point the way forward. Just like the small city of Phlius (7.2.1) their noble deeds are “more worth recording” than those of the major players, because these latter inevitably fail, largely because of the very fact that they are great. There is perhaps a Herodotean influence here. In the famous exchange between Croesus and Solon, the latter chooses relatively obscure men as the most happy because of their courage and piety and the honour they received after their death (Hdt. 1.28-33). Herodotus emphasizes the modesty of their means and position, and they clearly contrast with his Croesus, Cyrus and Xerxes, whose initial happiness and prosperity seem overwhelmed and subverted by the greatness of their position. In Xenophon, figures like Hermocrates, Mania and Polydamas seem to play the role of Herodotean Tellus and Cleobis and Biton, while great leaders like Alcibiades, Lysander and Jason seem to parallel Croesus, Cyrus and Xerxes in their cycles of rising and falling. Now the style of Xenophon’s characterizations is much closer to the austere characterizations of Thucydides than to the stereotyped, elaborate characterizations of Herodotus, replete with the Byzantine workings of fate and folk-tale elements,<sup>8</sup> but Xenophon certainly shares with Herodotus the idea that moderation is a virtue and excessive power, authority, power or ambition

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<sup>8</sup>See especially, J. A. S. Evans, “Individuals in Herodotus,” in *Herodotus, Explorer of the Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991): 41-88.



is a recipe for disaster.

### **Historical Causality**

Epaminondas, as the last of the major Greek leaders treated in the *Hellenica*, follows a different pattern from other major characters. Xenophon goes out of his way to show that he was the ideal general in every way, though he had good reason to criticize if he so wanted (pp. 319-20). By this he shows that though there are possible human explanations for chronic Greek political instability, the answer ultimately lies with the gods. In the earlier part of the *Hellenica*, Xenophon seems to focus on the human aspects of Greek political failure. To be sure there are many indications of the involvement of the gods: storms either help or hinder a leader (1.1.16, 1.6.28, 2.4.3); the gods can often be construed as supporting the pious (2.4.14). and thwarting the impious (5.4.1). Yet the emphasis tends to be on the character and actions of human beings: positively, their military acumen, their ability to encourage their soldiers, their discipline, boldness and intelligence bring about positive results; negatively, their strategic ineptitude, arrogance, lawlessness and rashness cause failure. As Xenophon gets closer to the end of his narrative he puts more emphasis on the divine. We notice this shift in emphasis in Jason, for though he displayed every military virtue, and was greater than any contemporary, he was not able to fulfil his ambition to rule all of Greece because of his sudden assassination. That Xenophon perceives the





divine as most significant in the death of Jason is indicated by the importance he gives to Jason's own statement, "The god often delights to make the great small," (6.4.23) and by the absence of any human failure that could be attributed to his assassination. The influence of the divine then reaches its zenith in the life of Epaminondas, as I have already noted. Xenophon's approach here is clearly closer to Herodotus than to Thucydides, who famously avoids all reference to the gods whether for historical causality or otherwise. Herodotus' understanding of divine causality, with its emphasis on cross-generational curses, premonitory dreams and frequent use of the words ἔδει and χρῆν is much more fatalistic than Xenophon's.<sup>9</sup> Xenophon's gods act both to uphold justice, rewarding the pious and punishing the impious (see 3.4.11, 4.4.12, 5.4.1), and to frustrate the expectations of humans (7.5.26).<sup>10</sup> But in general they both resort to the divine to account for historical realities and see the divine as laying low the proud and prosperous. But it is not completely true that "the hand of God is an explanation that dulls the quest for truth,"<sup>11</sup> because both Herodotus and Xenophon are

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<sup>9</sup>See Peter Derow, "Historical Explanation: Polybius and His Predecessors," in *Greek Historiography*, ed. Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 75-6.

<sup>10</sup>See Dillery, *History of His Times*, 36-7, and the critique of his views on the double aspect of Xenophon's perspective on the divine in "John Dillery, *Xenophon and the History of His Times*," reviewed by Frances Skoczylas Pownall, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 97.4.22 [online].

<sup>11</sup>Cawkwell, *History of My Times*, 45, note.



aware that to resort to the divine does not preclude the search for human explanations.<sup>12</sup> Xenophon shows this awareness at *Hell.* 7.5.12, where he states that it is possible to attribute Archidamus' unexpected success in unfavourable circumstances to the divine (τὸ θεῖον) or to the power of men's desperation. But in the last chapter of the *Hellenica*, the divine is no longer the comprehensible principle that punishes impiety and rewards righteousness, but is the disrupter of human expectations. And this is the note on which Xenophon ends his work. It would seem then that this is Xenophon's final reflection on the disappointing reality of Greek political chaos: one can find many reasons on the human level why the great resources of leadership in Greece were not able to bring peace and order, but in the end there is an element which defies explanation. But he does not conclude that historical inquiry is a futile enterprise, for he commends the ongoing job to others (7.5.27) and allows his own work to stand as something useful to those who want to act in the public realm in a way that would benefit their state and Greece as a whole.

The overall purpose of the *Hellenica* appears to be more akin to that of Thucydides than Herodotus. While Herodotus wants to preserve for posterity the noteworthy deeds of Greeks and barbarians (1.1.1), Thucydides wants his work to endure forever as something useful

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<sup>12</sup>Derow, "Historical Explanation," 76, writes, "Now, predetermination... may be a fact, but it is not an explanation, and Herodotus knew this. The explanation of human affairs has to be done at the human level."



(ὠφέλιμον) for those who want to understand the events of history in the light of the grim realities of human nature (1.22.4, 3.82.2, 3.84.2). The *Hellenica* too displays a dim view of humanity, which is perhaps not surprising since it deals largely with the depressing details of Greek internecine strife, unlike Herodotus' *Histories* which report on the glorious Greek defeat of the Persians. It is also undoubtedly written to pass on something useful to its readers. I suggest Xenophon thinks his work useful in two ways. First, because it is possible to discern the connections between behaviour and consequences by observing historical figures, it is a sort of cautionary account of what sort of actions and attitudes political and military leaders should avoid and what sort they should embrace so as to improve the political status of the Greek cities. Second, because there is an inscrutable divine element at work in history, the greatest lesson a leader can learn is that of humility.





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